

David Bunevacz accuses biz associates of beating him, stealing car, watch, cell phone

Gov't posts record budget surplus of P54.1B

Batangas vice governor seeks Comelec exec's inhibition in hearing of protest of rival Ermita

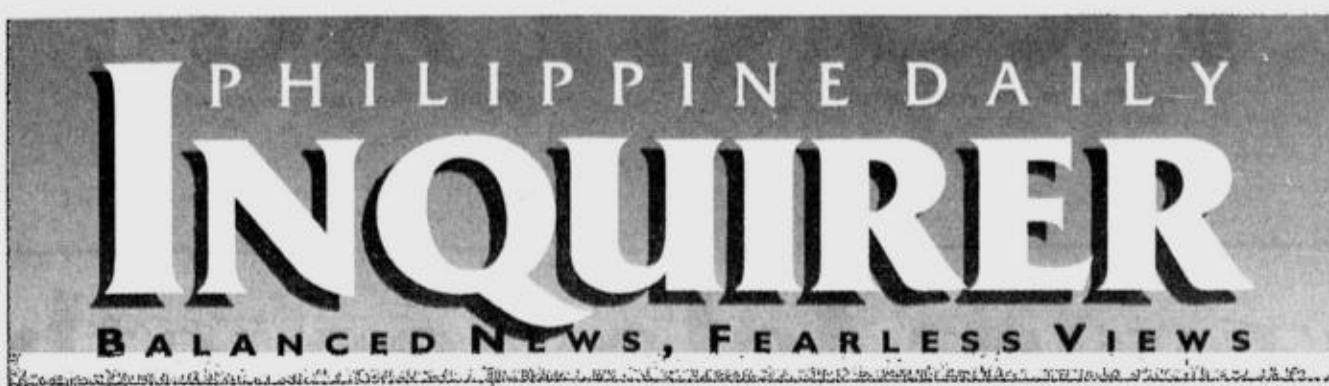
Suspect arrested in murder of lifestyle icon Ernest Santiago

Property bust? Lunar land prices are rocketing



LONDON—PROPERTY investors smarting from this year's housing bust in the United States might do well to look farther afield—even out of this world.

PROPERTY / A21



Wednesday, December 19, 2007 ★★ 11 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 11 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

RP hike in US military aid depends on rights cases

WASHINGTON—US LAWMAKERS HAVE agreed to boost military aid to the Philippines and Indonesia, but some of the money would be contingent on human rights improvements.

The Philippines would see its aid improve slightly from \$29.7 million in 2007 to \$30 million this year. Of that, \$2 million would

RP HIKE / A6

Weary feet, happy faces

'Gov't tool,' censors body accused over films X rating

By Christian V. Esguerra and Marinel R. Cruz, Entertainment

THE GOVERNMENT'S CENSORS board has provoked two militant lawmakers by giving an X rating to three films purportedly casting the Arroyo administration in a negative light.

Gabriela Representatives Liza Maza and Luzviminda Ilagan yesterday filed a resolution seeking a congressional inquiry into the rating. They alleged that the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) was being used "for political repression."

The complaint referred to the short films "Mendiola" and "A Day in the Life of Gloria Arroyo," and "Rights," a compilation of "public service announcements on human rights, extrajudicial killings and disappearances."

Maza said in a statement: "The MTRCB, in rating these movies X, has proven itself to be an effective

GOV'T TOOL / A8

Witness tells court UP coed chained to bed

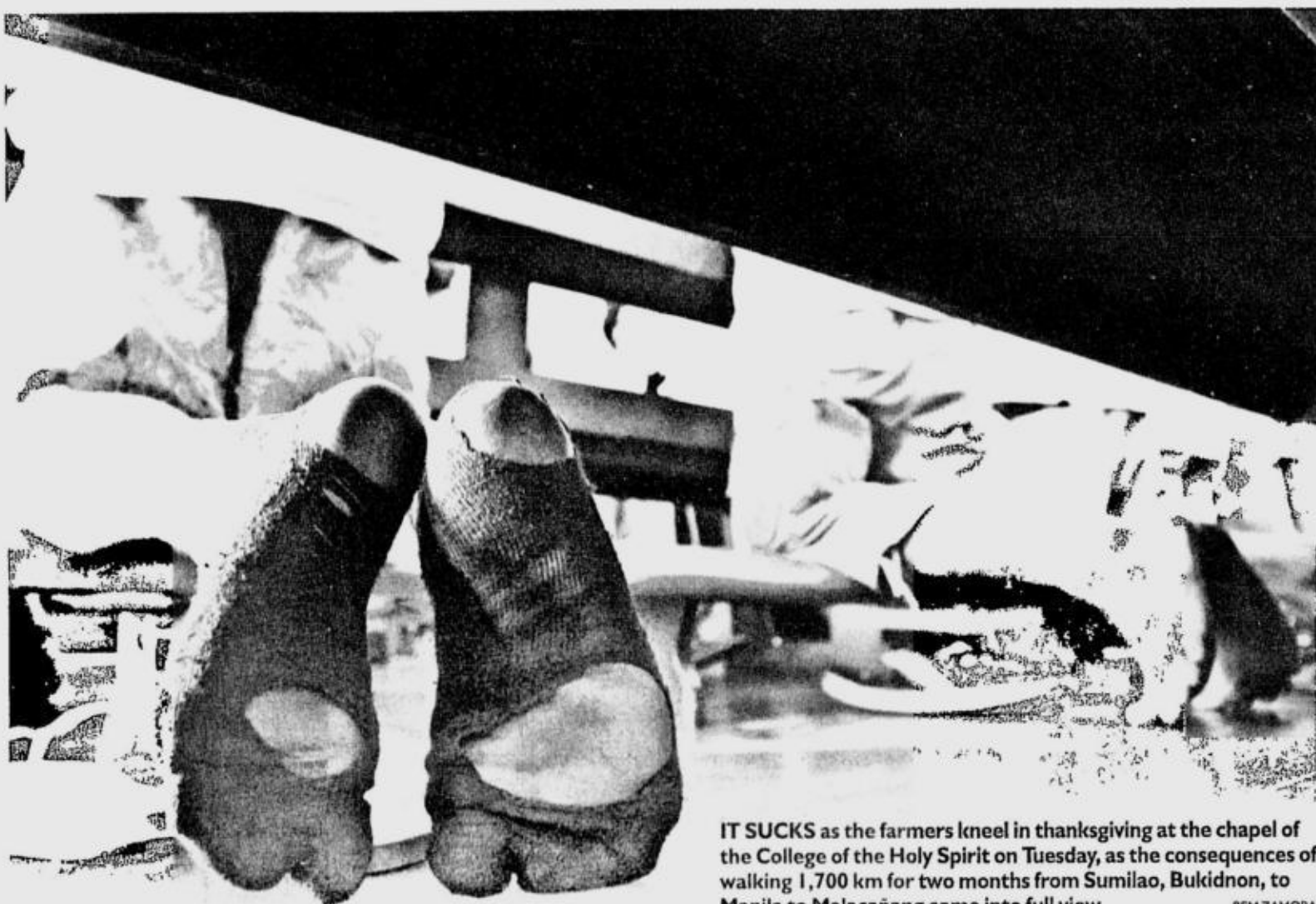
By Leila B. Salaverria

THE WITNESS TESTIFIED HE saw the missing student in a military camp where he had been taken after he was kidnapped by paramilitary soldiers last year.

A farmer yesterday told the Court of Appeals that he saw the missing student of the University of the Philippines, Sherlyn Cadapan, chained to a bed in a military camp in Bulacan. Raymond Manalo testified during a hearing on an amparo petition filed by the mothers of Cadapan and Karen Empeño, another missing UP student, to stop the military from harming their daughters as well as Manuel Merino, who was al-

WITNESS / A8

GMA revokes land-use conversion of Sumilao estate



IT SUCKS as the farmers kneel in thanksgiving at the chapel of the College of the Holy Spirit on Tuesday, as the consequences of walking 1,700 km for two months from Sumilao, Bukidnon, to Manila to Malacañang come into full view.

REM ZAPORA

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

A DAY AFTER TWICE meeting with the Sumilao farmers, President Macapagal-Arroyo took what her officials described as "the first step toward the return" of the land they are claiming.

The President, through Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, authorized the issuance of an order revoking the land-use conversion of the disputed 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon.

What was reclassified as agro-industrial land—and now being developed by San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI)—has been reverted to agricultural land covered by the government's Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), according to Ms Arroyo's spokesperson, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

But Marlon Manuel, the farmers' chief lawyer, said the order had no clear directive on what the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) should do next.

"It will be the start of another long battle to return the land to the farmers," Manuel said.

Along with Cabinet Secretary

WEARY / A10

Church to monitor farmers' case all the way



JUSTICE, PEACE EMBRACE. In her first meeting on Monday morning with the farmers, President Arroyo hugs Hilda San-ahan, one of the farmers' leaders chosen to meet Ms Arroyo.

By Beverly T. Natividad and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH YESTERDAY promised continued assistance to the Sumilao farmers in their land claim.

"We will try to ... help the farmers through ... until [President Macapagal-Arroyo's] decision comes true for them. We will follow this through with the Church in Mindanao," Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo told the INQUIRER.

He said the Mindanao dioceses, as well as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' social action arm, the National Secretariat for Social Action (CBCP-Nassa), would monitor the case and the implementation of the President's executive order.

Pabillo heads the CBCP-Nassa.

But Senators Benigno Aquino III and Gregorio Honasan questioned Ms Arroyo's decision to place the disputed 144-hectare property in Sumilao, Bukidnon, under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Aquino said Ms Arroyo should have arranged for a compromise agreement between the farmers and San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), which had proposed to develop the

CHURCH / A10

Hard part begins: 4-step process takes many months

By TJ Burgonio

THE 55 HIGAONON FARMERS are virtually "back to square one" in their fresh bid to reclaim a former corn plantation in Sumilao, Bukidnon, which was placed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) yesterday.

The farmers will have to go through the same tedious process—which could take from eight months to more than a year—before they could possess and till the 144-hectare plantation in Sumilao town, a

HARD PART / A10

2 METRO BOMBINGS

Batasan blast claims life of sixth victim

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THE BATASAN BOMBING CLAIMED the life of a sixth victim on Monday night when a staff member of Negros Occidental Rep. Pryde Henry Teves, who was injured in the blast, died in a hospital in Quezon City.

Vercita Garcia, 34, succumbed to multiple organ failure secondary to multiple blast injuries at around 6:30 p.m. on Monday.

She had been confined at St. Luke's Medical Center for more than a month since the Nov. 13 bombing.

Garcia's remains lie at Arlington Memorial chapel on Araneta Av-

enue in Quezon City.

Her death followed those of two other Teves staff members last month. Maan Gale Bustalino died on Nov. 14 while being transferred from Malvar General Hospital to Capitol Medical Center.

Dennis Manila died on Nov. 30 while confined at St. Luke's. Manila's right leg was amputated because of the massive injuries he sustained.

Others killed in the blast were Basilan Rep. Wahab Akbar, who died several hours after the bombing; Marcial Taldo, the driver of Gabriela party-list Rep. Luzviminda Ilagan, who was killed instantly, and Julasiri Hayudini,

a staff member of Akbar who died hours after the blast.

Nine people, including Teves and Ilagan, were injured in the bombing.

Four days after the blast, the Philippine National Police (PNP) declared the Batasan bombing case "solved but not closed" following the killing of three alleged Abu Sayyaf members in a raid in Payatas, Quezon City, on Nov. 15.

But the PNP said it had yet to pinpoint the mastermind.

Former Basilan Gov. Gerry Salapud-din admitted knowing two of the three supposed Abu Sayyaf members

BATASAN / A21

PNP postpones release of Glorietta 2 blast report

By Alcuin Papa

A FULL TWO MONTHS AFTER THE deadly Glorietta 2 mall explosion, the Philippine National Police (PNP) is now saying that the public may have to wait until after the Christmas season to find out the full story behind the blast.

Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman, Southern Police District (SPD) director, yesterday said the investigators and the experts they had consulted had asked for an extension of the deadline for the submission of their final report.

Ticman said the investigators told him the experts had asked for a January deadline and that he was "inclined to approve" the request.

Earlier, National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) chief Director Geary Barias and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said the final report—which would include recommendations on charges to be filed against those believed responsible—would be released today.

But Ticman said investigators had found "vital" evidence that could be

PNP POSTPONES / A21

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Mostly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laos	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Mostly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Mostly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Mostly Cloudy

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Second FRONT PAGE

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Gonzalez gags Jalosjos, other cons

Order triggered by child rapist's claim he's a free man; not a prisoner

By Leila B. Salaverria and Julie M. Aurelio

BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION OVER THE RELEASE of convicted child rapist Romeo Jalosjos, and the latter's threat to sue government over the reversal, media interviews with all inmates and prisoners will now have to be cleared with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Gonzalez yesterday issued a memorandum to the Bureau of Corrections ordering that all media interviews with and press briefings by inmates and prisoners will not be allowed without prior clearance with his office.

In a phone interview, Gonzalez said he issued the direc-

tive because of a press interview that Jalosjos gave in which he insisted that he was now a free man, despite a presidential order stopping his release, supposedly set for Dec. 16.

Prison officials last Sunday discharged Jalosjos in line with an order issued by President Macapagal-Arroyo reducing his two life terms to 16 years.

Jalosjos was convicted in 1997 for two counts of statutory rape and six counts of acts of lasciviousness under

the Revised Penal Code. His victim was an 11-year-old girl.

In line with the Malacañang order, prison officials last Sunday ordered Jalosjos' discharge as by their computation, by Dec. 16 Jalosjos had served, with allowance for good behavior, 16 years in prison.

But following a public outcry, Malacañang swiftly reversed itself. Gonzalez stopped the Bureau of Prisons from releasing Jalosjos, saying that justice department

computations showed that Jalosjos should be released in April 2009 at the earliest.

Last Sunday, Jalosjos walked out of the NBP armed with a certificate of discharge, only to submit himself again to prison officials after the Department of Justice said he could not be freed yet.

Gonzalez said he was reviewing the computation and checking the validity of the time credits given to the former Zamboanga del Norte congressman by former Bureau of Prisons Di-

rector Vicente Vinarao.

In his interview with reporters the other day, Jalosjos threatened to take legal action against the government if he is not released soon.

Gonzalez yesterday said statements like these from Jalosjos only muddled the information reaching the people.

"They will confuse the public by their statements," he said.

Vinarao yesterday defended his computation of Jalosjos' remaining time in prison in an interview with dzBB radio.

Gonzalez, Reyes face bypass anew

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE CABINET APPOINTMENTS of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes are unlikely to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA) this year.

But Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and Trade Secretary Peter Favila who are scheduled to appear today before the CA's plenary session are expected to be confirmed.

Two members of the bicameral CA yesterday moved to defer deliberations on Gonzalez's appointment until next year while two senators are against Reyes' appointment.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal and party-list Rep. Joel Villanueva said they want more time to grill the Justice secretary on "several issues" before his appointment is submitted for the plenary's consideration.

Last meeting

Today's plenary session is the CA's last meeting this year before Congress goes on a month-long recess for the holidays starting Dec. 21. Thus, Gonzalez confirmation would have to wait until next year.

"Out of respect for members of the CA, normally the tradition is to accede to their request.... He (Gonzalez) is effectively bypassed," Sen. Panfilo Lacson said.

"It's not the first time this happened. We can schedule a hearing after we return from the break, but he (Gonzalez) has to answer all opposition and there are a lot of them," he added.

Lacson said among the issues that would be thrown against Gonzalez was his deliberate absence at a Senate hearing last week into the media arrests at the height of the Manila Peninsula siege last Nov. 29.

"He insulted the Senate by

saying the hearing was not in aid of legislation... He should explain himself for making remarks tantamount to insulting the Senate as an institution," Lacson said.

Earlier two other CA members, Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Jinggoy Estrada, have given notice that they would invoke Section 20 when the CA takes up Reyes' nomination during its plenary session today.

'Unfit for office'

Section 20 allows a member to move for the suspension of the CA's action on any nomination or appointment until the next session without having to give any reason.

"I simply believe that he is unfit for the office," Santiago told reporters. She pointed out that Reyes was only given Cabinet posts by President Macapagal-Arroyo as a reward for withdrawing support from then president Joseph Estrada when he was still the military chief.

"I am against this practice of rewarding military officials for breaking the law in favor of one presidential personality against another, rewarding them with a series of government posts for which his educational background or training have never prepared him," Santiago said.

Sen. Estrada said he was against Reyes' appointment as Energy secretary because he was "totally unfit" for the post.

He said he no longer considered Reyes' crucial defection that eventually led to his father's ouster.

"But I still have a lot of reasons why I have to block his confirmation," said Estrada.

"During the budget hearings he could not explain the hiring of 120 consultants, the hiring of a foreign consultant. He wanted to hold office in all the attached corporations of the Department of Energy. And he fired the president of Transco in an arrogant manner," he said.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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TAYLOR HICKS at the Hard Rock Café yesterday: "I'm not into competing anymore."

RYAN LIM

American Idol Taylor Hicks is here

By Fran Katigbak
Lifestyle

HAS TAYLOR HICKS, winner of "American Idol" Season 5, gone from manic performer to subdued balladeer?

The salt-and-pepper-haired singer-songwriter charmed fans of the hugely popular reality talent search in 2006 with his raspy, soulful voice. But his signature dance moves were routinely criticized by judge Simon Cowell, who repeatedly said Hicks was "performing like he's drunk."

Yesterday afternoon, in a crisp white shirt, black jacket, denim jeans and alligator-skin boots, Hicks made a smooth entrance, playing the blues on his harmonica, when he turned up to meet local media at the Hard Rock Café.

The first "American Idol" champ to visit the country (finalists Constantine Maroulis and Elliot Yamin were previous Manila visitors), Hicks, a native of Alabama, is here for a series of shows sponsored by the Ayala Malls.

"I heard from friends of mine that this is the place to come if you want to sing and perform music," said Hicks, 31. It was Fil-Am José "Sway" Penala, a fellow finalist, who first told him about the Philippines, he added.

Inspiration

The self-taught musician said his biggest inspiration was Ray Charles. And so, he said, he was honored to sing "The Right Place," originally written for Charles, in his self-titled album due for release this month.

"Life after 'American Idol' has been like sitting on a rocket ship," said Hicks. "I can't go out without bodyguards."

On the bright side, "I get to travel to play my music, and collaborate with some really great artists."

His triumph on "Idol" brought him a record deal with Clive Davis and 19 Recordings Limited/Arista Records.

Asked if he feels pressured to surpass the achievements of previous "Idols," Hicks replied: "I'm not into competing [anymore]—I'm into performing music and gaining new fans."

Hicks will be at the Greenbelt 3 Park tonight at 8 and at the TriNoma Activity Center tomorrow, 7 p.m.

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Corrections

IN THE DEC. 17 ISSUE, a front-page article—"Ernest helped define RP's lifestyle landscape"—misstated the name of a Southern Tagalog route that features different attractions. The route is called Viaje del Sol—not Via del Sol.

IN LATER EDITIONS of the Dec. 18 issue, the front-page banner story—"GMA lifts farmers' hopes"—misspelled the surname of a bishop. The bishop's name is Broderick Pabillo—not Padillo.

THE SAME ARTICLE misstated the date when truncheon-bearing police blocked Sumilao farmers who were marching on Malacatang. The incident happened on Dec. 7—not Dec. 17.

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MAGDALO TRIAL

Mutineers want judge out

By DJ Yap and Leila B. Salaverria

ELEVEN JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS charged with rebellion, including now Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, in connection with the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny yesterday asked the Makati judge hearing their case to inhibit himself for supposedly 'prejudging' the case.

They sought the voluntary inhibition of Judge Oscar Pimentel of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 148, citing their "perception of what they believe to be the unfair handling of the case."

In particular, the 10 accused junior officers, who are represented by lawyer Reynaldo Robles, cited a question by Pimentel in the last hearing that was addressed to Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, a defense witness.

In the Dec. 11 hearing, the judge asked Lim if he was "aware that the act committed by these officers are not only punishable under the Articles of War but also the Revised Penal Code."

The 11 accused said they were "utterly surprised, shocked and mortified" when they heard the question.

"As far as they are concerned, the

said question clearly indicates the state of mind of the Honorable Presiding Judge and indubitably shows that the Honorable Presiding Judge has already prejudged their case," they said.

Trillanes, the junior officers along with Lim and others belonging to the Magdalo group walked out of Pimentel's courtroom during the Nov. 29 hearing, marched in the streets and occupied the Peninsula Manila for six hours.

In their motion, the 11 also cited what they described as Pimentel's "apparent rush" to have the accused present their evidence.

In contrast, they said the prosecution was given four years to present its evidence.

The 11 accused also moved for the cancellation of the Dec. 20 hearing and the suspension of the proceedings.

Also yesterday, civilians accused of joining the Manila Pen siege led by Fr. Robert Reyes asked the Supreme Court to cite Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco for contempt for allegedly letting "political considerations" affect the

decision to charge them with rebellion.

The petitioners included lawyers J.V. Bautista, Argee Guevarra and retired Navy Capt. Julian Advincula, who were among the 14 civilians ordered released by the Makati RTC which found that there was not enough basis to support the rebellion charge against them.

According to the petitioners, their being known as critics and opponents of President Macapagal Arroyo was taken into account when the DOJ found probable cause to charge them with rebellion.

Gonzalez said he had ordered prosecutors to study whether the released civilians could be held liable for sedition or inciting to sedition.

Gonzalez said he was also looking at the possibility of reviving the rebellion complaint.

"I'm not satisfied with the finding of the Makati court. Our finding is that they could at least be held liable as accessories in the rebellion," he said in a phone interview.

Velasco, for his part, said he was just doing his mandated task.

"If there should be anybody who

should be cited for contempt by the court, they are those who disrespected the hearing at the Makati RTC last Nov. 29 by staging a walkout and a rebellion," he said.

The petitioners also said Gonzalez and Velasco's actions disobeyed the Supreme Court's June 2007 ruling where it "reprimanded and chastised" Gonzalez and Velasco for allowing political considerations to be a factor in conducting the inquest and preliminary investigation of the rebellion complaint against six party list representatives, and Vicente Ladlad, Nathanael Santiago, Randall Echanis and Rey Claro Casambre.

Two civilians yesterday said that the DOJ should stop the preliminary investigation of their case, citing the Makati RTC's recent dismissal of the rebellion charges filed against them.

Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona's daughter Stella and civilian Ray Linaac, through their lawyer Ernesto Francisco Jr., indicated their sentiments in their counter-affidavits with a motion to dismiss which they filed before the DOJ. *With a report from Margaux C. Ortiz*

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These kids want their parents for Christmas

By TJ Burgonio

SURFACE "THE DISAPPEARED." Stop the abductions. Pull the military out of the villages.

These demands, not toys, were on the Christmas wish list of children whose parents had been abducted by the military or whose families had been displaced by government operations against communist rebels

in the countryside.

The children wrote down their wishes on a large Christmas card they made and plan to send to President Macapagal-Arroyo this week with the help of the Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns.

"As we speak, many human rights violations are being committed. But we're hopeful the President will listen to our wishes so we'll find justice," Liza, 16, whose fa-

ther and brother were abducted in Quezon province in June 2006, said at a press briefing.

Four other children, who were traumatized by the atrocities allegedly committed by soldiers in their villages, aired the same hope. They asked that their last names be withheld for security reasons.

"We hope she will grant our wishes," said Lyn, who was shot at and tagged a child warrior by the military in Baguio, Cagayan, last year.

The children made the giant card during a workshop organized by Salinlahi, an umbrella organization of child rights and welfare organizations nationwide. They shared their experiences in a forum dubbed "Children Speak Out."

"This Christmas, I wish the military would surface my father and brother so we can live as a whole and happy family again," said Liza, now a senior high school student in Quezon City.

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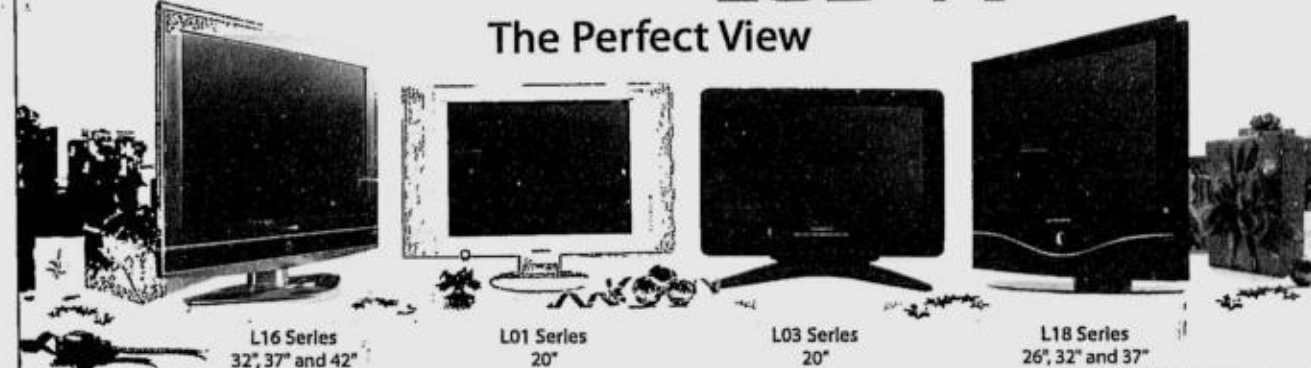


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		Sitaw	P50-60
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SOURCE: DA-Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

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GMA wants truce reviewed

THE GOVERNMENT SAYS THAT PEACE AND prosperity was its Christmas and New Year's gift to the nation but what if its offer of the traditional holiday truce is not acceptable to insurgents?

President Macapagal-Arroyo has called for a review of the unilateral three-week Christmas ceasefire declared by the Armed Forces following attacks by the communist New People's Army in Palawan.

Three Marines were killed within hours of the AFP's suspension of military operations against the rebels last Monday.

At a meeting of the National Security Council which she convened yesterday, the President said a review of the unilateral truce was in order since the "rebels don't accept this ceasefire."

It could not be ascertained at press time whether the NSC has already recommended the lifting of the Christmas truce.

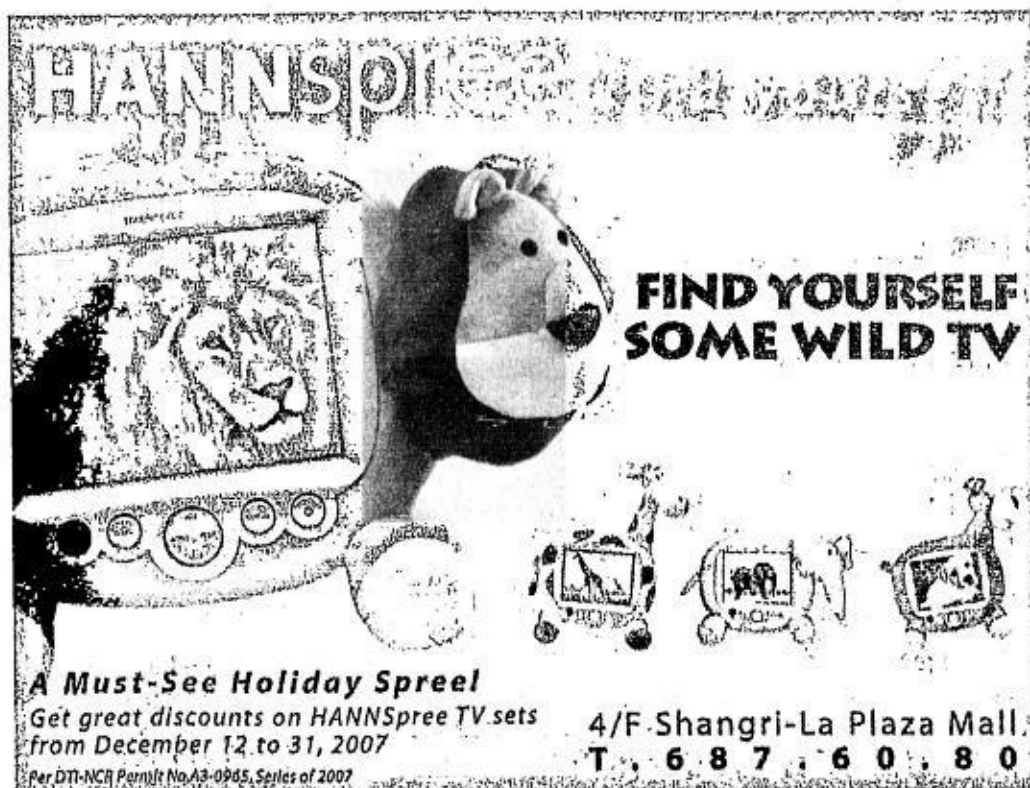
The NPA last Monday rejected the AFP's offer of a Christmas truce and a three-year ceasefire proposal, vowing to mount more attacks in the coming days.

"Gen. Esperon's proposal for a three-year ceasefire is totally ridiculous and downright dubious," said Gregorio Rosal, spokesperson for the Communist Party of the Philippines, the political arm of the 6,000-member insurgents.

He was referring to a proposal by AFP Chief of Staff General Hermogenes Esperon last week for a three-year nationwide cessation of hostilities between both sides, paving the way for the resumption of stalled peace talks.

Ms Arroyo told the NSC, that she was saddened by the untimely death of the three Marines.

Michael Lim Ubac



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Wednesday, December 19, 2007
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Jdg 13:2-7, 24-25
Gospel: Luke 1:5-25

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there lived a priest named Zechariah, belonging to the priestly clan of Abiah. Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, also belonged to a priestly family. Both of them were upright in the eyes of God and lived blamelessly in accordance with all the laws and commands of the Lord, but they had no child. Elizabeth could not have any and now they were both very old.

Now, while Zechariah and those with him were fulfilling their office, it fell to him by lot, according to the custom of the priests, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. At the time of offering incense all the people were praying outside; it was then that an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. On seeing the angel, Zechariah was deeply troubled and fear took hold of him.

But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, be assured that your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will bring joy and gladness to you and many will rejoice at his birth."

This son of yours will be great in the eyes of the Lord. Listen: he shall never drink wine or strong drink, but he will be filled with holy spirit even from his mother's womb. Through him many of the people of Israel will turn to the Lord their God. He himself will open the way to the Lord with the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah; he will reconcile fathers and children, and lead the disobedient to wisdom and righteousness, in order to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I believe this? I am an old man and my wife is elderly, too." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel, who stands before God, and I am the one sent to speak to you and bring you this good news! My words will come true in their time. But you would not believe and now you will be silent and unable to speak until this has happened."

Meanwhile the people waited for Zechariah, and they were surprised that he delayed so long in the sanctuary. When he finally appeared, he could not speak to them and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He remained dumb and made signs to them.

When his time of service was completed, Zechariah returned home and some time later Elizabeth became pregnant. For five months she kept to herself, remaining at home, and thinking, "What is the Lord doing for me! This is his time for mercy and for taking away my public disgrace."

Commentary

We are drawing close to the birth of the child, with history and geography jumping around. Now we meet some of the remnant, the faithful who believed in the promises and staked their lives on them, relying on God's word in spite of the events occurring around them in history. Do we belong to God's remnant and interpret the Scriptures not from a worldly political/nationalistic way but in God's way, so that we are converted and our religion gives us God's sight? The word of the Lord comes to Manoa's wife who was barren. But she will bear a son, and the Lord tells her to obey his commands for the "son she will conceive and give birth to will be consecrated to God from the womb." And the son will begin the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. The announcements follow the same pattern from the beginning. The story is told from the husband's point of view though it is the woman who gives birth. It is the same with Zechariah the priest and Elizabeth his wife. This time the word comes to the man, Zechariah, in the temple. He questions how this can be and is struck dumb because he does not trust the words of God. But the words, even if not believed, come true, and Elizabeth conceives.

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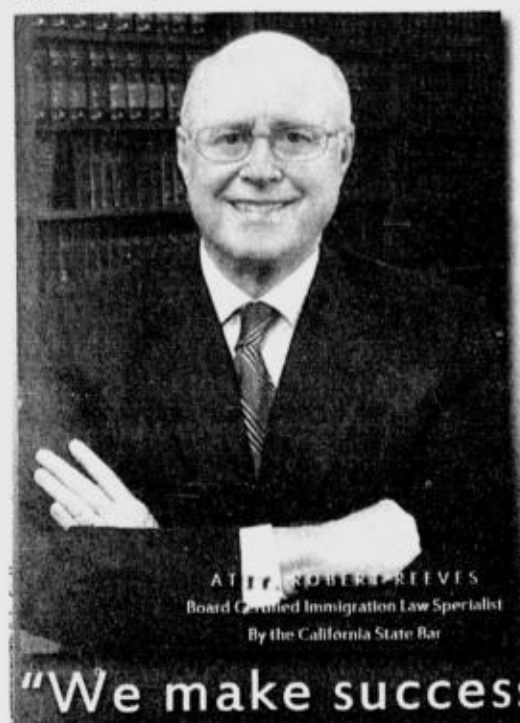
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WOMAN IN CHARGE. President Arroyo looks like she's on top of whatever it is Finance Secretary Margarito Teves is telling her before the start of the National Economic and Development Authority meeting at the Palace on Tuesday.

EDWIN BACASMAS



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On 19 November 2007, **PHILIPPINE OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION (POTC)** held its **ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING**, followed by POTC Board of Directors' Organizational Meeting (where a quorum was present throughout both meetings). The following were elected:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Daniel C. Gutierrez | - Director and Chair |
| Lin I. Bildner | - Director and Vice-Chair |
| Katrina Ponce Enrile | - Director and President/CEO |
| Marietta K. Ilusorio | - Director and Treasurer |
| Francisca Benedicto Paulino | - Director |
| Pablo L. Lobregat | - Director |
| Allan S. Montañó | - Director |
| Honorio A. Poblador III | - Director |
| Justice Santiago J. Ranada (Ret) | - Director |
| Victoria C. de los Reyes | - Corporate Secretary |
| Rafael A. Poblador | - Asst. Treasurer |

On the same day, the **PHILIPPINE COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CORPORATION (PHILCOMSAT)** **ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING** (POTC being 100% registered/beneficial owner thereof) was held, immediately followed by a PHILCOMSAT Board of Directors' Organizational Meeting (where a quorum was present throughout both meetings). The following were elected:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Radm. Abraham R. Abesamis, AFP (Ret) | - Director and Chair |
| Pablo L. Lobregat | - Director and Vice-Chair |
| Ramon Jacinto | - Director and Chair, Exec. Committee |
| Lin I. Bildner | - Director and President/CEO |
| Marietta K. Ilusorio | - Director and Vice President |
| Katrina Ponce Enrile | - Director and Treasurer |
| Lorna P. Kapunan | - Director |
| Honorio Poblador III | - Director |
| Rodolfo G. Serrano, Jr. | - Director |
| John Benedict Sioson | - Corporate Secretary |
| Rafael A. Poblador | - Asst. Treasurer |

On December 11, 2007, the **PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORPORATION (PHC)** **SPECIAL SHAREHOLDERS' MEETING** (Philcomsat being 81% registered owner thereof) was held, immediately followed by a PHC Board of Directors Organizational Meeting. The following were elected:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Katrina Ponce Enrile | - Director and Chair |
| Daniel C. Gutierrez | - Director and Vice-Chair |
| Ramon Jacinto | - Director and President |
| Lin I. Bildner | - Director and CFO/Treasurer |
| Radm. Abraham R. Abesamis, AFP (Ret) | - Director |
| Oliverio Laperal | - Director |
| Pablo L. Lobregat | - Director |
| Jose Ma. Ozamiz | - Director |
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| Rodolfo G. Serrano, Jr. | - Director |
| Prudencio Somera | - Director |
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| Lorna P. Kapunan | - Chief Legal Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer |

RP hike in US ...

From page A1

be contingent on the country cracking down on extrajudicial killings allegedly by government agents.

US officials have expressed worry over a wave of killings of left-wing activists blamed on Philippine government forces.

The officials are said to want President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration to enforce reforms recommended by a UN official to prevent extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations before approving additional military aid.

Philippine officials have denied allegations that the military was behind most of the killings and have said the military has no policy of targeting civilians.

As of end-October, the Philippine human rights group Karapatan had recorded 887 killings of militants, as well as nearly 200 cases of enforced disappearances, since Ms Arroyo took office in 2001. The INQUIRER count of killings is about 300.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson, Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro, said US aid "will go a long way in the government's efforts in addressing the terrorism problem."

But he refrained from direct comment on the condition set by the US lawmakers for the release of some of the assistance.

"To us in the AFP, if there's an aid, it will go a long way. But if there's none, we will make do with whatever resources we have," Bacarro said.

No pressure needed

Commissioner Eligio Mallari of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights said that the government "is doing its best" to address the problem of extrajudicial killings, and deserved aid.

Mallari cited the efforts of the judiciary, which has set up 99 special courts to handle such cases and organized a summit early this year to draw up measures to solve the problem.

"The government need not be pressured [by the United States] because it is really trying its best to solve political killings in the country. But such efforts are being slowed down by bureaucracy and there are so many procedures that should be followed," Mallari said on the phone.

\$500 billion

The US lawmakers also decided to bar all but a small amount of military aid to Sri Lanka until the Bush administration had certified that the Sri Lankan government had made certain improvements in its human rights practices.

The provisions were part of a \$500 billion-plus spending bill agreed on by negotiators from the Senate and the House of Representatives that will pay for most of the federal government's 2008 budget.

The overall bill has been delayed by disagreements between Congress and President George W. Bush over its size and

allocation of financing for the Iraq war.

The compromise still will need to be approved by the full House and Senate and sent to Bush for his signature before it takes effect.

Passage this week

Congress is expected this week to pass the bill, which includes \$35 billion overall for the state department and foreign aid programs.

The negotiators agreed to provide \$15.7 million in direct military aid for Indonesia, matching the Bush administration's request for a country it sees as crucial to fighting terrorism in Southeast Asia. The bill would delay approval, however, of \$2.7 million of the money until US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has reported to Congress that Indonesia had devised plans to:

- Account for past human rights violations by the Indonesian military.
- Allow public access to Papua province, where a small separatist army seeks independence.
- Provide a deadline for completing a criminal investigation into the murder of Munir Said Thalib, a human rights activist and critic of Indonesia's military who was poisoned on an airline in 2004.

Bulwark against terrorism

The United States eliminated military ties with Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, in 1999 to protest alleged rights abuses by Indonesian troops in breakaway East Timor.

The ban was lifted in 2005 by the Bush administration, which views the Indonesian government as a bulwark against Islamic militancy. Figures do not include small amounts allocated for training.

Lawmakers also linked military aid to Sri Lanka to the island's improving its rights record, looking to spur change on an island that has seen a two-decade struggle between the government and Tamil Tiger rebels seeking a separate homeland for Tamils, an ethnic minority.

Surveillance cooperation

The bill would block all but a small amount of military aid for activities to include surveillance cooperation from the Sri Lankan authorities.

The bill is an embarrassment for the administration of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, which says its operations are meant to convince rebels that they cannot win a military victory.

The US bill would make any military grants for Sri Lanka dependent on certification by the US secretary of state that Sri Lanka has:

- Prosecuted military officials alleged to have recruited child soldiers and committed extrajudicial executions.
- Provided humanitarian groups and reporters access to Tamil areas of the country.
- Agreed to allow the United Nations to establish a human rights office in the country.

With reports from Jocelyn R. Uy, Nikko Dizon, PDI Research and AP

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PHILIPPINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION and PHILIPPINE DENTAL ASSOCIATION

Position Paper on Cheap Medicine Bills in Senate and Congress

The primary objective of Senate Bill No. 1658 and House Bill 2844 is to ensure availability of medicines at low or affordable cost.

We, the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) and the Philippine Dental Association (PDA), fully endorse measures to reduce medicine prices. *We strongly support Senate Bill No. 1658 and House Bill No. 2844 in so far as amending the Intellectual Property Code RA 8293 is concerned. We, however, object to the provision of Sec. 29 of HB 2844 Amending Section 6 of RA 6675 otherwise known as the Generics Act of 1988.* This amendment removes the physicians' and dentists' prerogative and discretion to include the brand name of drugs in their prescription.

The PMA and PDA believe that a necessary component in delivering an adequate Health Care System is the fiduciary doctor-patient relationship. Guided by the Hippocratic Oath, physicians and dentists utilize all their technical knowledge, skills, and expertise to give the best to their patients. They are likewise accountable for all their professional acts to their patients, peers, medical organizations, and to the State. Only physicians and dentists are empowered by the State to perform this awesome task and responsibility.

The proposed amendment to the Generics Act relegates the physicians' and dentists' task and responsibility to the drugstore salesperson. This puts the patients' and general public's health at a great risk, unnecessarily.

Drugs of the same generic name may differ in terms of therapeutic efficacy and safety. Only the physician and dentist, who have the experience and the expertise to recognize the clinical responses of success, treatment, failure, or idiosyncratic manifestation of drugs and drug interactions, have the competence to recognize the same in his or her patient.

The government must also strengthen the capability of the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) to assure strict compliance with the standards of safety, efficacy, and quality of pharmaceutical products. This is a prerequisite to the success of the Cheaper Medicine Bill. Hence, BFAD must be provided enough resources to ensure that its operations are at par with international standards.

Available data shows that not all drugstores are manned by or are under the licensed pharmacists' direct operational supervision and control. Delegating the power of discretion on drug selection to the salesperson with no or limited knowledge of drugs and their interaction, poses and creates danger to public health and safety. Any weakness on the part of BFAD in performing its mandate to supervise and regulate medicines while transferring discretion on drug selection from the physician and dentist to the drugstore salesperson could spell disaster to the safety of Filipino consumers. Public safety is, and should be, non-negotiable.

Only physicians and dentists are accountable legally, morally, and ethically for the success or failure of their treatment. Hence, while we, the Philippine Medical Association and Philippine Dental Association, support the two proposed legislative measures to lower the prices of medicine, we oppose in strongest terms the Amendment of Section 6 of the Generics Act. The amendment is a great disservice to the Filipino people.

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The Philippine Medical Association is the umbrella organization of the medical profession in our country with 118 Component Societies under the 17 regions, 8 Specialty Divisions, 55 Specialty Societies, and 37 Affiliate Societies.

GMA rating slips some more despite Erap pardon

ONE OUT OF TWO FILIPINOS APPROVED of President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to pardon former President and convicted plunderer Joseph Estrada. Nevertheless, Ms Arroyo's satisfaction rating fell to net -16 from the previous quarter's net -11, according to a survey by the Social Weather Stations.

"[T]he President did not gain from the pardon because those who agreed with it were even more dissatisfied with her than those who disagreed with it," SWS said in a statement released yesterday.

According to the SWS, majority or 54 percent of respondents agreed that Ms Arroyo's decision to pardon Estrada after he was convicted of plunder "was good for the country." About one in every five or 23 percent disagreed.

Among those who opposed the pardon, 36 percent were satisfied with the President's performance while 48 percent were dissatisfied which gave Ms Arroyo a net satisfaction rating of -12.

Among those who supported the pardon, her net satisfaction rating was net -22, with 30 percent satisfied and 52 percent dissatisfied with her performance.

The survey, conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3, showed that 32 percent were satisfied and 48 percent were dissatisfied with the President's performance.

In the survey conducted last September, 34 percent were satisfied and 45 percent dissatisfied with her performance.

"The President's net ratings were close to neutral in the first and second quarters of 2007, before returning to negative levels again," SWS said.

Net satisfaction rating is the difference between the number of respondents who are satisfied and dissatisfied.

SWS attributed the decrease in the President's satisfaction rating to "loss of support" in Mindanao and the Visayas, and "worsening dissatisfaction" in Metro Manila.

The President's satisfaction rating in Metro Manila "worsened substantially" from net -24 (28 percent satisfied, 52 percent dissatisfied) in September to net -34 (25 percent satisfied, 59 percent dissatisfied) in the latest survey.

The survey was conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the balance of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Kate Pedrosa, Inquirer Research

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BI exceeds '07 target

THE CONTINUED influx of foreigners into the country has enabled the Bureau of Immigration (BI) to surpass its 2007 collection target, posting an income of more than P1.56 billion from January to November.

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said the 11-month collection was higher by P180 million than the P1.3 billion target for the period.

"As of the end of November, the BI has surpassed the P1.46-billion income that it registered in 2006, thus maintaining the steady rise in the agency's revenues over the past five years," Libanan said.

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PAF officer shoots aide over drinks in Basilan

By Tarra Quismundo

A PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE OFFICER SENT to Mindanao to lead the PAF's humanitarian efforts in Basilan is under military custody after he fatally shot his right-hand man.

Lt. Col. Arturo Apud, 54, is confined to quarters at the 3rd Air Division in Zamboanga City for the shooting of his assistant, Capt. Jesus Fernandez, 44, on Saturday.

"Unfortunately, they had a misunderstanding, they had an exchange. These things are not supposed to happen but it's unfortunate," said PAF chief Lt. Gen. Horacio Tolentino, who was reached by phone while visiting airmen in Palawan yesterday.

Lt. Col. Epifanio Panzo Jr., Air Force spokesperson, said Apud headed the PAF engineering brigade based at the 355th Aviation Engineering Wing in Pampanga that was sent to Basilan to undertake public works projects as part of the government's humanitarian efforts alongside the continuing combat operations in the South.

Citing an initial field report, Panzo said Apud and Fernandez had a heated argument while having drinks in their barracks in Sumisip, Basilan, at around 9:30 p.m. on Dec. 15.

"They dared each other... they both drew their guns, but Fernandez was beaten to the draw," Panzo said.

Fernandez suffered bullet wounds in the body from Apud's M-16 rifle. His remains will be airlifted to Manila on a C-130, Panzo said.

"We'll have to investigate further to determine what really happened. [Apud's liability] will depend on the circumstances," Tolentino said.

He said Apud may be transferred to the Villamor Air Base stockade in Pasay City while the shooting is being investigated.

Despite the incident, the PAF's engineering projects in Basilan will continue as planned, Tolentino said.

Carolino, former Army officer; 80

COL. JEREMIAS "JIMMY" CAROLINO, former director of Century Bank and the Philippine National Bank remittance center in the United States, died on Sept. 30 in Glendale, California, at the age of 80, his family has announced.

Carolino, of Paete, Laguna, graduated from the Philippine Military Academy in 1951 and was a member of the Corps of Engineers of the Philippine Army.

His widow Adoracion said a memorial service was held for Carolino at the Burbank First United Methodist Church followed by the rendering of military honors by members of the Philippine Military Academy Association, Southern California chapter, headed by Cavalier Pete Cruz.

The flag that draped Carolino's casket was handed to his widow by Commodore Ramon Alcaraz.

Carolino is also survived by his sons Armand, Arnel, Arthur and Arcelino; daughters-in-law Beth Bailon, Linda San Miguel, Tina Briones and Annabelle Canos, and grandchildren Mark, Allan, Cristina, Adriel, Agean, Byron, Jeremy and Angeleah.

He served in the Korean War in 1952-54. Later, he worked on the construction of the Manila North Diversion Road (now the Northern Luzon Expressway). In 1972, then President Ferdinand Marcos appointed him general manager of the Food Terminal Inc. At the same time, he was appointed to the Asian Center for Development Administration, a United Nations agency based in Malaysia.



FROM P

Cool definitely has its rewards as **PHILIP MORRIS MENTHOL KING SIZE** brings you its "Cool Catch" promo!

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Jobless rate down in '07, says survey

By Michelle V. Remo

THE JOBLESS RATE DROPPED TO 6.3 PERCENT of the labor force in October from 7.3 percent in the same month last year, in what the government said was a natural consequence of a robustly growing economy.

Based on the Labor Force Survey released yesterday by the National Statistics Office, there were some 2,261,700 unemployed persons in October out of a total labor force of 35.9 million, or 6.3 percent of all workers.

Conversely, the number of employed persons was 33,638,300 for an employment rate of 93.7 percent.

Myrna Asuncion, head of the National Economic and Development Authority policy and planning department, said the drop in the unemployment rate meant there was an increase in the number of people generating income. This supported the earlier report on the growth of the Philippine economy that beat most forecasts, she said.

Economic indicator

"More people are now earning income. This is a reflection of the economy's performance," Asuncion said in an interview.

The economy, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), grew by 7.1 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2007. This has kept the economy on track to surpass the official growth target rate of between 6.1 and 6.7 percent for the entire year.

The GDP, the most common yardstick of a country's economic performance, is the sum of all goods produced and services rendered within an economy during a period.

The NSO said nearly half, or 48.8 percent, of all employed persons in October belonged to the services sector. The sector, which recorded the fastest growth among key sectors of the economy so far this year, includes the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry which counts call centers.

The latest data showed the services sector, boosted by the income generated by the BPO industry, grew 8.2 percent year-on-year from January to September this year, up greatly from the 6.1 percent recorded in the same period last year.

The agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector grew by 4.6 percent from January to September, while the industry sector (which includes manufacturing and mining) grew by 6.8 percent.

Police arrest Ernest Santiago murder suspect

POLICE HAVE ARRESTED ONE OF THREE alleged killers of lifestyle icon Ernest Santiago in Pagsanjan, Laguna, late Tuesday afternoon.

Pagsanjan Mayor George "E.R." Ejercito Estregan, however, would only identify the suspect as "Zosimo" because police were still on the trail of the two other suspects. Estregan said the three had been "very close" to Santiago.

He said the two suspects who were at large were seen at the wake for Santiago at Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park in Makati City.

Santiago's bloodied body was discovered in his bedroom in his Pagsanjan home on Sunday morning. He had apparently been struck in the head with a hard object. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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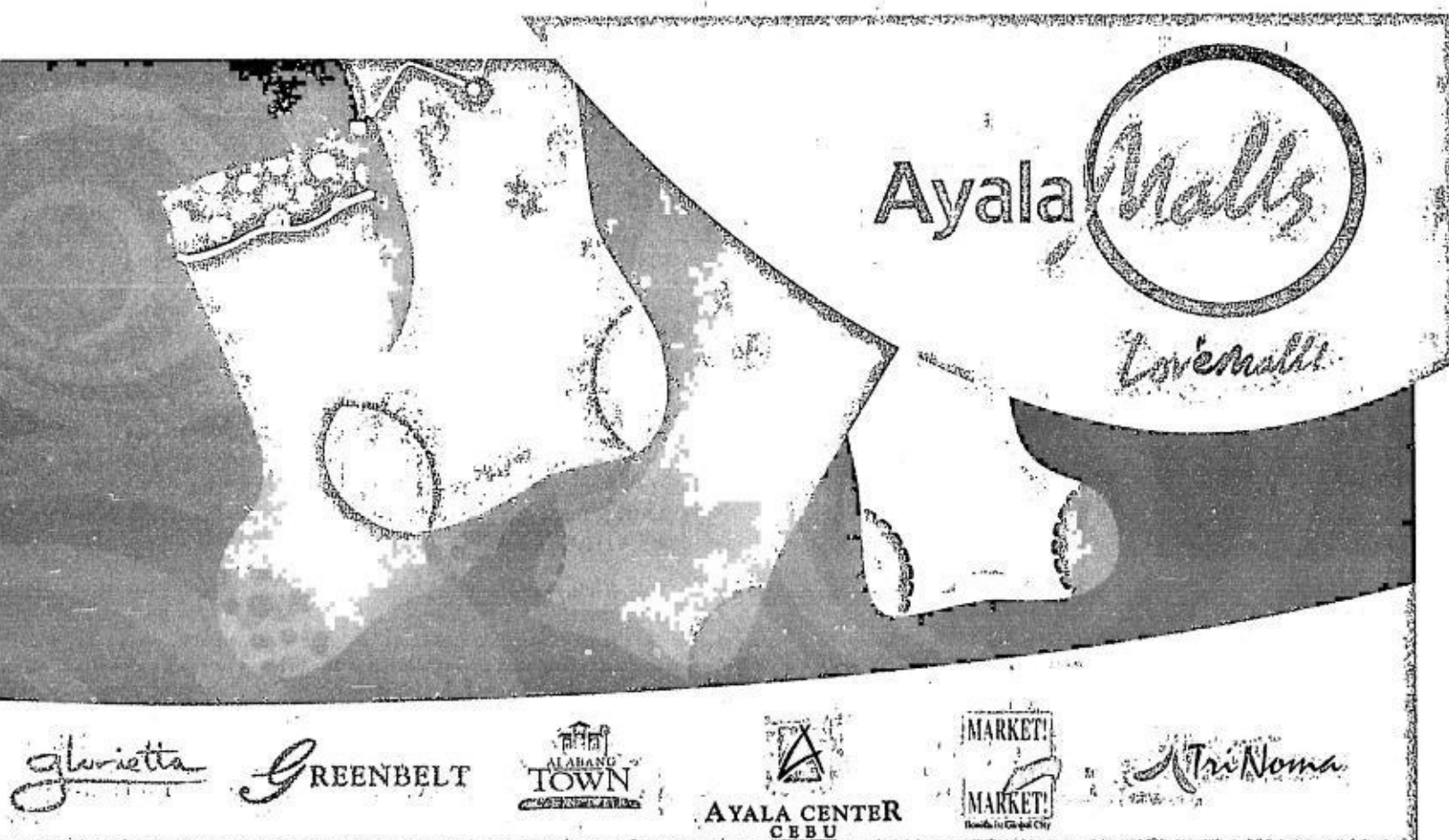
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Moral fakery

IN THE DICTUM IMMORTALIZED BY EULOGIO RODRIGUEZ, "politics is addition." And there is no greater believer in the wisdom of that statement than President Macapagal-Arroyo. While populist presidents believe in wholesale addition—in the summoning up, and manipulation of, public opinion—our operator-presidents believe in consolidating support, one leader at a time. The reason for this is that public opinion is fickle, but once earned (or bought) the support of individual leaders is much more predictable, if not dependable.

Traditional politicians, from Jose Avelino (of "What are we in power for?" fame) to Jose de Venecia, all know, too, that they are not saints—a convenient justification for wallowing in political sins. That being the case, the President pragmatically offers, not redemption, but survival—for herself, and her allies. With this offer comes what must be, for our political class, a welcome pragmatism that refuses to make value judgments on those allies. The priority is upholding the common devotion to power; the only obstacle is public opinion.

It is in this context that the hastily postponed pardon for convicted pedophile Romeo Jalosjos must be placed. He continues to be influential in his home province, and he has never been coy about supporting the President. Last weekend, when he almost regained his freedom, it came, not as a bolt of lightning out of the blue, but after the possibility, indeed, probability, of a pardon was dangled in the media for months.

The President may have feigned anger and surprise—shocked, shocked, she was, to hear of it!—but it was just that. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez obligingly looked for scapegoats in the lower levels of the bureaucracy. Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sergio Apostol was less mentally dishonest and said the pardon was withdrawn because of a public clamor. And the Palace, as a whole, tried to downplay the Jalosjos pardon by pointing to the administration's policy of granting clemency to all prisoners who reach the age of 70.

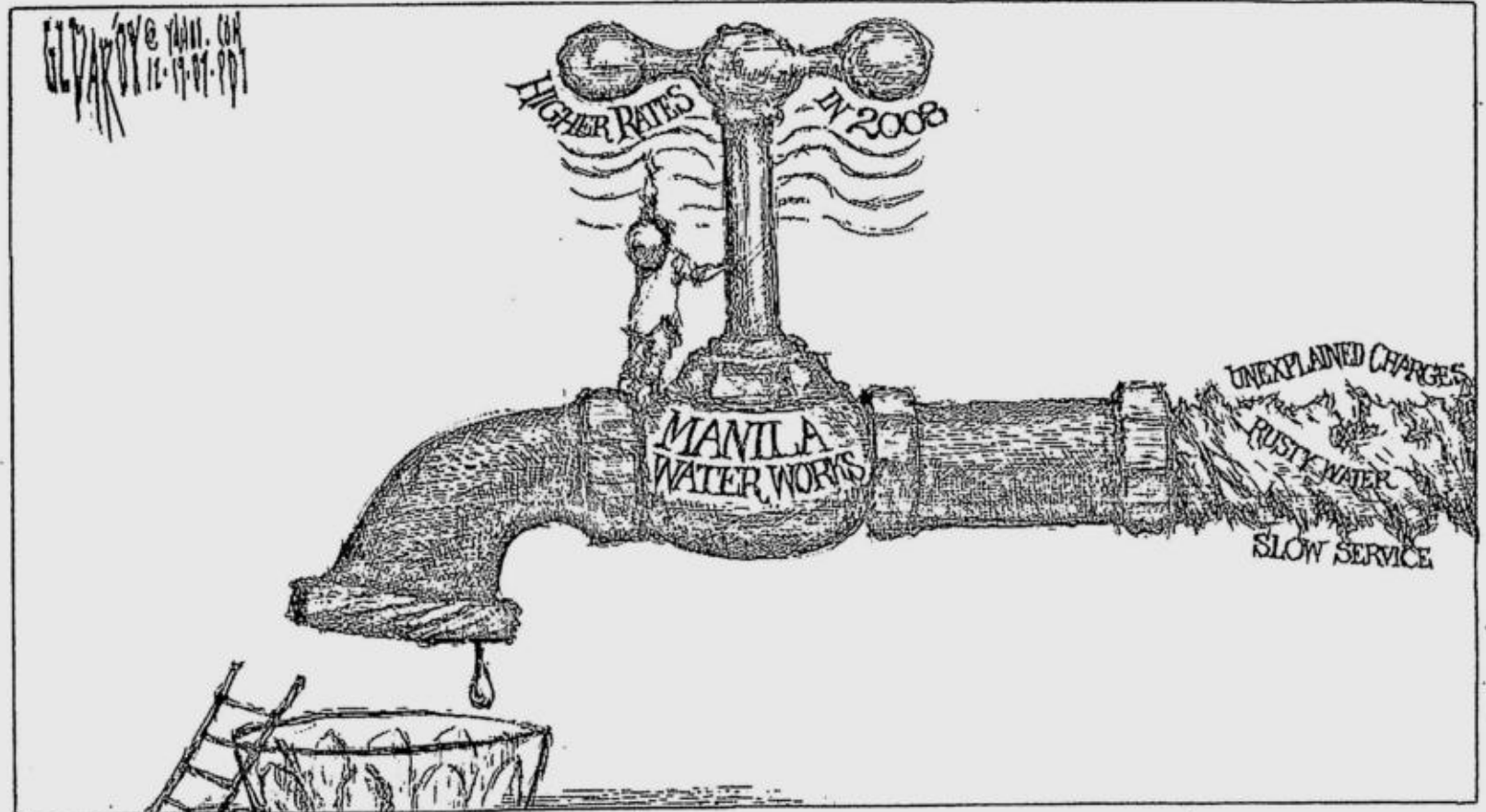
But the Palace confuses the forest for the trees. No one opposes clemency for aged prisoners in principle; but it betrays a wrong sense of principles if the policy ends up restoring freedom first to the most notorious convicts. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, for example, has identified 120 convicts who have reached that age, but who have yet to receive a pardon. Yet the energies of the government seem to focus, instead, on people like Jalosjos.

All things being equal, a convicted pedophile should be at the back of the line, not in front.

Our prison system is anchored on the modern idea that offenders must be punished by separation from society, but also given every chance to show contrition: the hope of reform should never dim except in the most heinous of cases. The President's policy, then, in light of this, betrays another flaw. It is a humanitarian policy but ignores the very real possibility that there may be offenders who deserve to be released, not just because of their age, but because of good behavior. However, nothing to encourage this has been done—which would serve as an incentive to the correctional, and not just punitive, role our jails should play.

Instead, the country once again fell victim to the cynical calculations of the authorities: that a controversial act, if done on a weekend, won't be noticed. To make sure of it, the action was leaked months in advance. The only surprise was that the public noticed, anyway, and objected, forcing a Palace retreat. As with all retreats, political or military, someone ends up left behind. In this case, Jalosjos.

Yet the former congressman knows he needs the President and that his value only comes in when she needs votes in the House of Representatives. She can afford to leave him dangling, but one thing is certain: she will find a way to soothe his ruffled feelings, though for now she will claim her feelings are as ruffled as the public's. If that isn't moral fakery, we don't know what is.



Villar and Garcia: Dismantle cartels

HOW CAN THE RAPIST OF AN 11-YEAR-OLD girl, sentenced to two life terms in prison, be released after serving only 14 years—years which were not all spent behind bars but outside of it? Romeo Jalosjos was allowed by prison authorities to build his own rest house in a subdivision in the outskirts of the New Bilibid Prisons.

Prisons Director Ricardo Daplat's excuse is that the subdivision is considered "still part of the reservation."

Doesn't that defeat the intent of the law, that convicted prisoners be confined behind bars? Lets face it, Jalosjos is a privileged prisoner inside Munti because he has plenty of money. While poor prisoners sleep on the bare cement floor, Jalosjos has his own rest house, with perhaps an air conditioner or at least electric fans; he has his own tennis court inside the prison and other privileges of wealth. The intent of the law is to make the convicted felon suffer inside prison to pay for his crime. Has that happened to Jalosjos?

Now prisons officials were about to release him prematurely, acting entirely on their own, without any orders from the President who is the only person authorized to grant executive clemency. The release papers were already finished and Jalosjos' constituents in Zamboanga del Norte were already celebrating for his homecoming. Luckily, the media reported his impending release and GMA, "upset" at the news (according to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez), ordered his continued confinement in prison.

Can prisons officials, without any direct orders from the President, release prisoners prematurely? I don't think so, but why has not the President scolded her prisons officials for this act? There are a lot of mysterious things going on inside the prisons, and this caper is just the latest.

How can such a miscarriage of justice happen? How did it come about? Because of GMA. She commuted Jalosjos' two life terms to 16 years. Gonzalez said what is in the mind of the President is that Jalosjos can be released when he reaches the age of 70. But Jalosjos will turn 70 only in 2010. So how come he was almost released last Dec. 16, without orders from Malacañang? Will wonders never cease?

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz



Senate President Manny Villar was the lone guest at last Monday's Kapihan sa Manila, and he said he expects the Senate to pass "from three to five priority bills" before it adjourns today, the 2008 budget being the top priority. Asked about the Cheaper Medicines Bill which the Senate has long passed, Villar said he expected the House to pass its own version also today.

Asked about the differences between the two versions, the Senate president said the House version has price controls while the Senate version has none, relying on competition in the free market to force prices down. The House version, by the way, has been stalled by the objections of Cebu Rep. Pablo Garcia who claims the present version favors multinational pharmaceutical giants, which are responsible for the high prices of medicines in the first place.

Analyzing Garcia's objections, it seems he is right and the present version of the bill may indeed be a booby trap. It is not unusual for vested interests, when they cannot stop the passage of a bill, to have provisions inserted in the bill to punch loopholes in it. That has happened in the Oil Deregulation Law and in the Epira law that were, like the Cheaper Medicines Bill, intended to break the hold of cartels. In the Oil Deregulation Law, the transition period was shortened into a farce and price controls were abolished; in the Epira, the provision against cross ownership was abolished.

In the present Cheaper Medicines Bill, a provision was inserted requiring a presidential proclamation of an emergency before parallel importation can be made. In the Intellectual Property Code (IPC), that is

not necessary—the government or an authorized third party can make parallel importations in the public interest. Another provision requires a patent holder's consent before others can experiment on the subject of the patent, when the "experimentation process" is not covered by patent restrictions in the IPC. Do you think a multinational company will give such consent?

Villar thinks an anti-trust law similar to that in the United States should be enacted to prevent cartels and monopolies. Enacting separate laws for each industry with cartels is slow, as we have seen, he said. Another cartel that should be dismantled, he agreed, is the cement cartel which is behind the high prices of cement that are hobbling the construction industry and putting homes beyond the reach of most Filipinos.

Cement being vital to the construction industry, it should be cheap, said Villar, who is in real estate development. But almost all of our cement factories are owned by a foreign-based cartel that has increased prices and persuaded the Department of Trade and Industry to impose high tariff rates on cheap, imported cement.

Steel, another vital component of construction, is also costly, Villar said, adding that he hopes our lone steel mill can be rehabilitated so we are not dependent on imported steel.

TRIVIA: Former Ambassador Roy Señeres, whom I cited in a previous column for saving Sarah Balabagan from execution but who was fired by GMA as head of the National Labor Relations Commission, texted me to say that he was not "fired."

"I resigned on June 25, 2005," he said, "after she scolded me in the Palace in front of some Cabinet officials, for meeting with US Ambassador Ricciardone and asking him to destabilize her."

Myther and Friends is holding its Christmas party tomorrow and asking those who are having a difficult time buying raffle prizes to donate cash instead.

Road to perdition

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



becomes an even bigger nightmare that topic inevitably crops up in all the parties I go to. It's everybody's pet peeve. Fortunately, storytellers have managed to live to tell their tale, though in some instances, only by the skin of their teeth. Or at least not without seeing a gun waved in their faces from the retracting windows of the Black Car.

I've been a victim of the same thing. I was going to the Ateneo some years ago, trying to make it on time for a talk through the early morning traffic, when I ran into a slow-moving parade of cars in Katipunan. My mind being occupied by my talk, I did not notice it was a convoy ferrying God-Knows-Whom. They were occupying a couple of lanes. As I tried to squeeze past them, such as that was possible with the battalion of cars, jeepneys and school buses, around me, I got loud honks from the convoy. One of the cars tried to cut me off, probably feeling doubly insulted by the idea of a battered-down, decade-old Mitsubishi EL intruding on what they presumed to be their sovereign space. I barged on anyway, but not before seeing the driver's window roll down and a face emerge its mouth spouting French. I rolled down my own window and raised a dirty finger at it.

I know I shouldn't do those things, but those are moments when you do not think. Which is also quite incidentally why I keep arguing against allowing guns in cars: They are an engraved invitation to mayhem. Fortunately for me, by the time this happened I was nearing the Ateneo gate and the light at the corner had just turned left (this was before the U-turns). Even more fortunately for me, the car did not follow me to the

Ateneo. Though it would have been just as unfortunate for him, or worse, had he done so, as I would truly have crucified him afterward.

Most everyone I know has a horror story of this sort, which gets to be told especially at this time of year in gatherings. It never fails to stoke people to fury. So, to echo Los Baños' lament, why does this atrocity continue to bedevil us? Or more to the point, why do we allow it to do so?

Some time ago, Raul Gonzalez justified it by saying that public officials deserve the privilege because they are doing more important work than the ordinary citizens and should therefore not be deterred in any way from doing it. Trust that idiot to make idiotic statements like that. At the very least, what makes it idiotic is that if the current occupant of Malacañang is widely perceived as the most corrupt and murderous president in modern (and probably not just so) Philippine history, and if public officials, particularly appointive ones, are there to help her carry out those functions, then it behooves us to deter them in every possible way, not least by snarling them in traffic. That way they can steal and murder less. At the very most what's idiotic about it is that I, an ordinary citizen, do a lot more intelligent things in one day than Gonzalez will ever do in his lifetime.

There is no justification for it, and if you still need proof of it, you have this to show how over the last few years democracy has turned to autocracy, equality and fraternity have turned into rank and privilege, decency and consideration have turned into iniquity and oppression. To find comparisons for the way the convoys of Very Important Persons, or the Feeling Important Persons, demand to have a clear road ahead of them you have to go back to antiquity, to the time when Roman generals rode on chariots and their drivers lashed out with a whip at the slaves clattering up the road to get out of the way. That situation on our roads today says a great deal about the road we've taken as a country of late.

The road to perdition.

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Insensitive representatives

MANY FILIPINOS CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT AT least three full meals a day. Yet, the government didn't mind spending millions of pesos for the unnecessarily large entourage that traveled with President Macapagal-Arroyo to Europe, including around 30 members of the House of Representatives.

Whether or not the funds came from the public coffers is not the question. The "people's representatives" should have considered that

millions of Filipinos are mired deep in the bowels of poverty. Five thousand dollars for the fare of one person?

The millions of pesos spent for the junketeers could have been used to feed hundreds of street children or to buy textbooks for public school children. This is really a rotten government.

—CLARISSE SAN FELIPE,
sanfelipe_essiralc@yahoo.com.ph

LETTERS

Public auction held without prior notice

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE ACQUISITION by the Quezon City government (through a public auction) of the UP Sikatuna BLISS housing projects phases I and II in Diliman. The public auction, conducted last Sept. 27 by the Quezon City treasurer's office to collect some P17 million in real estate taxes from 1985 to 2007, came as a big surprise to the more than 2,500 residents of the two UP Sikatuna BLISS projects.

The housing projects were developed and constructed by the then BLISS Development Corp. under the Ministry of Human Settlements through a usufruct agreement with the University of the Philippines. The agreement allowed the residents to pay the rent in 25 years and to stay there for another 25 years.

The Quezon City treasurer's office did not bother to list down the names and addresses of the residents they were collecting taxes from. Neither did it send them prior notices specifying the taxes due or the pertinent tax declarations (the residents have not acquired—and they will never acquire—titles to the units awarded them) as bases for the collection of taxes. The owner of the lot is UP while that of the buildings is the national government represented by the National Home Mortgage and Finance Corp. (NHMFC) and the Home Guaranty Corp. (HGC).

It may help the Quezon City treasurer's office to know that after the BLISS Development Corp. and the Ministry of Human Settlements were abolished upon the assumption of the Aquino administration, no other government office was immediately designated to take over their functions. It was only after several years that the NHMFC was designated as the collection agency for phase I and the HGC for phase II.

Since the Quezon City government has acquired ownership of the two UP Sikatuna BLISS projects through the Sept. 27 public auction, would the residents now stop paying rent to the NHMFC and the HGC and instead start paying both rent and real estate taxes to the treasurer's office? Or, would the residents now be forced to join the ranks of informal settlers?

—ORLY PALACAPAC,
orly1028@yahoo.com

Alston also critical of non-state actors

SEN. JUAN PONCE ENRILE DENOUNCED the report of United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston as a mere "clerical job." Enrile added that Alston should have just shut up. (INQUIRER, 11/29/07)

For us, it is the fake ambush victim, now senator, who should shut up. The Alston report on human rights violations in the Philippines was quite objective. It castigated not only state institutions (Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, Inter-Agency Legal Action Group) but also non-state actors (Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, vigilante groups in Davao City, landowners and their goons) as responsible for arbitrary executions in the country.

As an agrarian reform advocate, we find particularly relevant in the Alston

report that section on the killing of peasants in agrarian reform disputes. Many peasants asserting their right to land under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program have been killed by goons of landowners and by alleged members of the NPA, who are both opposed to the implementation of the program.

Alston also correctly pointed out that local government officials "are often more interested in protecting the holdings of local elites" and police protection for peasants "has often been strikingly inadequate."

—RAFFY REY HIPOLITO,
advocacy officer,
Partnership for Agrarian Reform,
& Rural Development Services
(PARRDS), 85 K-10th St.,
Kamias, Quezon City

Clergy scored for lack of activism

WE ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED with the lack of activism of Church leaders in relation to the moral bankruptcy—corruption, cheating and lying—of government officials. Priests do not remind the faithful that it is their duty to fight corruption and to demand good governance. The priests do not read in churches or distribute the pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, demanding truth and good governance.

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to having an intelligent and free electorate (to ensure the election of good leaders) is the widespread poverty in our country. People in want can be easily bought and dictated upon by corrupt politicians. Poverty prevents them from spontaneously mobilizing themselves to show their indignation since they lack the necessary logistics. Poverty, therefore, has to be drastically reduced so that our recurring leadership problems will be resolved. Some say we have countless hectares of farmlands but they forget that there are not enough funds to irrigate and develop them because of the widespread and large-scale corruption in our government. We are left, therefore, to slowing down our population growth as a practical approach to combat poverty.

But the priests have not been brave enough to use the pulpit and other means at their disposal to instill in church members, especially those in the provinces, the need to be rational and to properly plan the family. They should tell the faithful that bringing

into this world children that they cannot support and who could end up as prostitutes in Malaysia or Singapore or as exploited domestic helpers in other countries is wrong and, possibly, even sinful. The priests can limit themselves to preaching natural family planning, but the point is: they should help solve the problem.

In Pampanga, Gov. Ed Panlilio, in the first five months of his term, collected more "lahar fees" than his two predecessors. The funds will be distributed to the province, municipalities and barangays for their projects. Good for the entire province. But all the mayors and provincial board members have ganged up on him to remove from the provincial government the authority to collect these fees. They are not happy that the province's resources have multiplied, that the hundreds of millions of lost income in the past are now being collected. And the only logical reason for this is, in the past, Pampanga's officials—from the governor down to provincial board members and to the mayors—feasted on the lahar fees by themselves to the exclusion of their constituents. Now their pockets are empty and they are crying for blood.

It appears that many priests are interested more in "lacing" their churches with gold, which does not benefit the faithful. This is a throwback to the past. They should take note that today, the luxurious European churches of the past serve more as tourist sites than as houses of prayer and worship.

—FRANCISCO ALCUAZ,
pacoalcu@zpddee.net



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Congress urged to pass Cheaper Medicines Bill

WILL THE 14TH CONGRESS BE ABLE TO pass the Cheaper Medicines Bill?

In 2005, I urged our lawmakers, for the sake of our country and our people, to give the bill priority and pass it before the 13th Congress shall have adjourned. A representative assured me that the bill would be passed if there was a quorum. Unfortunately, the majority of our representatives did not attend the final sessions of the 13th Congress. Had the bill been passed, it would have been one of the few legacies of the 13th Congress.

Last Sunday, I chanced upon the same representative. I shared with him my concerns about a similar bill, specifically, the likelihood of the 14th Congress failing to pass it as promised by Speaker Jose de Venecia several days ago.

Once again, I am urging Congress to finally pass the new and revised version of the bill (now House Bill 0001), the first bill to be filed on the first day of the 14th Congress.

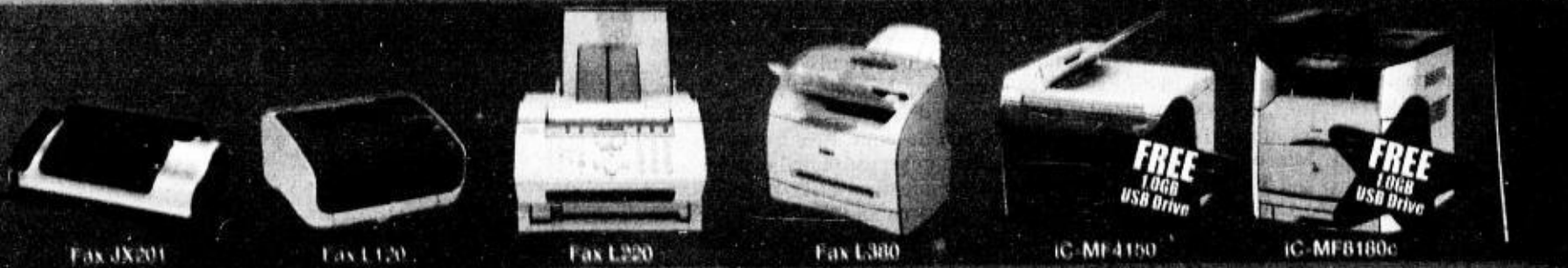
—JERRY A. QUIBILAN,
Crusaders for Peace,
Prosperity, Unity and Love,
jerryaquiblan@yahoo.com

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Inhibition of poll exec in Batangas case sought

THE LEGAL COUNSEL OF BATANGAS VICE Gov. Mark Leviste yesterday sought the disqualification or voluntary inhibition of newly appointed Commission on Elections Commissioner Moslemen T. Macarambon from the Comelec division hearing the petition of his rival, Edwin Ermita, son of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

In a motion to disqualify or inhibit Macarambon received by the Comelec last Dec. 11, the Leviste camp claimed that Macarambon, who is yet to be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments, will have to be extended another ad interim appointment by Malacañang, where Ermita's father is the Executive Secretary, whose office releases the presidential appointment.

In a statement quoting him, Leviste complained about the unseemly haste by which the Comelec First Division, headed by Acting Commissioner Resurreccion Borra, has ordered the immediate revision of the election returns and ballots despite the fact that Ermita has not yet paid in full the revision fees of P4.8 million.

"The unseemly haste is made all the more glaring when placed against a similar protest filed by Salvador Carlos against Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian, which was filed much earlier, and where my lawyer, Attorney Quadra is likewise the counsel for Gatchalian," the Batangas vice governor said.

Leviste won in the last elections with a lead of more than 19,000 votes over Executive Secretary Ermita's son.

Leviste's proclamation was delayed until June 30 as a result of moves made by the Ermita camp.

In an earlier interview, Leviste said should he lose in the recount, he would consider appealing the case to the Supreme Court.

Official Comelec results showed that Leviste got 334,847 votes, followed by Ermita, 316,578; actor Christopher de Leon, 150,817; Praxedes Bustamante, 2,006; and Fortunata Magsombol, 665.

In July, Ermita filed another protest against Leviste accusing him of cheating, acts of terrorism and intimidation, and contested the results in 34 towns of Batangas province. The charges, however, were denied by Leviste.

In October, Quadra filed a motion to dismiss Ermita's petition, which the Comelec denied. A motion for reconsideration was later filed in the same month but the poll body rejected it. *Marlon Alexander Luistro, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Nur aide named security exec

COTABATO CITY—A TRUSTED LIEUTENANT of jailed Moro National Liberation Front founder Nur Misuari has been named deputy national security adviser.

Thambeyapha Jayari Manjoorsa, an ophthalmologist, will join the office of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales.

He was appointed last month. Manjoorsa, 64, was with Misuari when they organized the MNLF in the early 1970s. He served as the front's intelligence chief.

A graduate of the Centro Escolar University, Manjoorsa was among the 90 Moro activists that Misuari, then a professor at the University of Philippines recruited in 1971. They were trained in Malaysia and spearheaded the Moro secessionist uprising in 1973.

From 1997 to 2001, he served as agriculture secretary of Misuari when Misuari was governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Jesus Dureza, presidential adviser on the peace process, said Manjoorsa's appointment was an indication of the government's determination to pursue peace in Mindanao.

The MNLF has been complaining of lack of involvement of its qualified leaders in regional and national governance as part of its peace pact with the government. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

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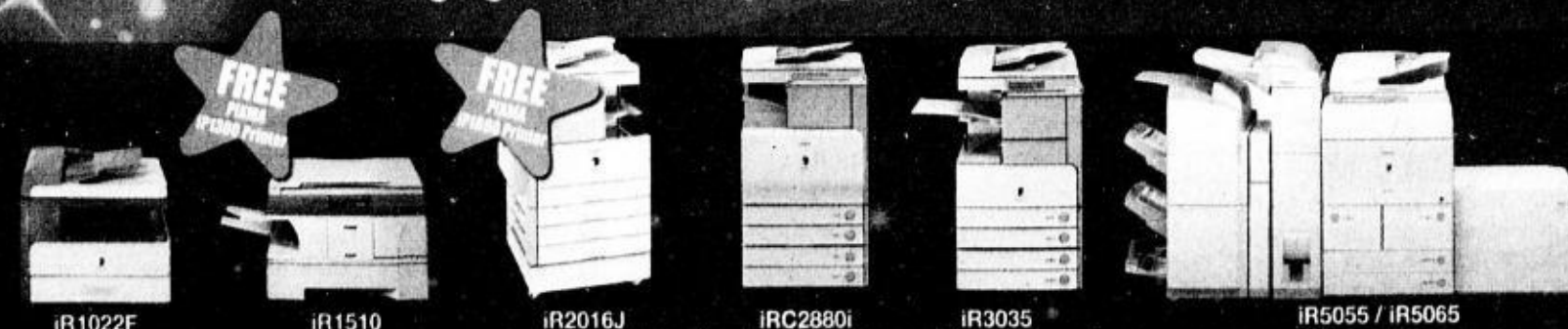
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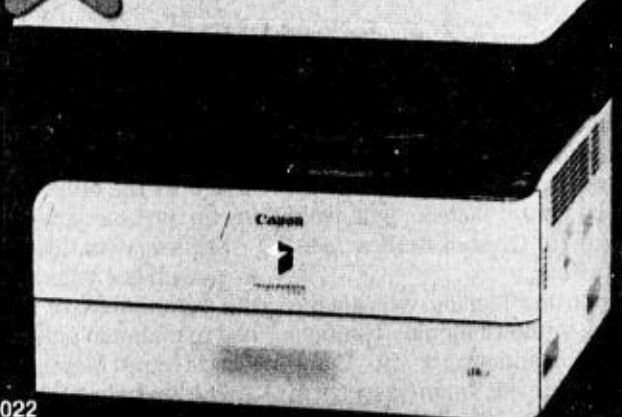
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THE PICTURESQUE rice terraces of Mayoyao are among Ifugao's top attractions.

PHOTOS BY EV ESPRITU

'Still an awesome landscape in Ifugao'

Just looking
at the rice
terraces
energizes and
inspires you'

By Maribelle Bimohya
Contributor

ALTHOUGH THE CENTURIES-old rice terraces of Ifugao have been included in the list of endangered World Heritage sites, these hallmarks of Ifugao industry, craftsmanship and indigenous knowledge, remain an awesome landscape.

This was the shared observation of about 70 international conservationists, architects and experts on traditional landscapes after they visited the rice terraces and interacted with villagers.

"Just looking at the terraces energizes and inspires you," said Marc de Caraffe, president of the International Council for Monuments and Sites' (Icomos) committee on vernacular architecture.

The experts joined the International Conference on Protecting Endangered Traditional Landscapes in Banaue town early this month. The meeting was organized by Icomos, an international organization of architects, urban planners, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians and other professionals involved in heritage conservation.

Icomos is the only nongovernment organization accredited to advise the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (Unesco) world heritage committee on cultural heritage matters.

Deterioration

During the conference held on Dec. 3-7, the experts discussed the status of the terraces and came up with recommendations on how to address the various issues surrounding the deterioration of the heritage sites.

"From all the presentations on the various efforts of the provincial government and the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (Sitmo) and the interaction with local folks, the group is pleased to know that there is a determined and creative effort from the Ifugao to help restore the terraces," said Augusto Villalon, Icomos Philippines chair.

With the programs already in place, the stakeholders must sustain conservation activities with the help of the national and local governments, NGOs and Filipinos in general, he said.

Brenda Saquing, provincial administrator, said that while the Ifugao people were striving to conserve their heritage, they were also seeking the help of every individ-

ual "who believes in beauty, freedom and survival" to pitch in in restoring the rice terraces.

"After all, the Ifugao rice terraces are not the patrimony of the Ifugao alone, but of the whole humanity," she said.

Recommendations

The workshops tried to seek recommendations on how to use heritage as a resource for income generation to keep the Ifugao from leaving their families' terraces.

Among the strategies recommended were arts and crafts development, marketing of the *tinawon* rice, and the production of organic vegetables, fruits and rice wine.

The experts also believed that the adventure and agro-eco-tourism industries must be strengthened to complement the development of the product industries in Ifugao.

With this, they agreed to push the improvement of the Bagabag airport in nearby Nueva Vizcaya to cut travel time of tourists going to Ifugao. The province is at least 10 hours by land travel from Metro Manila.

Among the other recommendations was to study if abandoned terraces could be leased to other farmers or to local governments, which should devise ways to make these mountain farms productive.

"Some Ifugao farmers are practicing a system of leasing untilled lands called *uhat*. Usually the owner will let his farm be tilled by another farmer for free for three years. On the fourth year, the owner will get half of the harvest, provided that he will also share in whatever agricultural inputs or labor cost needed," said engineer Norberto Tayaban, a rice field owner.

Tayaban said many professionals who could not go to their rice farms preferred to let relatives or village mates till the lands instead of abandoning these.

"While it is true that there are abandoned rice fields, these are usually due to lack of water in the terraces. We cannot till the land without water," said Perfecta Dulnuan, Banaue planning and development coordinator.

Dulnuan, who allows her relatives to till her rice fields, said that while rice terrace farming was not very profitable, "[we have a] responsibility to our ancestors to keep the *payo* or rice fields watered and planted."

"There is an unwritten law that we have to take care of our inheritance. A member of the community who abandons his rice fields without a reasonable [explanation] is considered lazy and disrespectful of his ancestors' toil and labor," she said.



AN IFUGAO woman carries newly harvested *tinawon* rice stalks on her head.

Everlasting to restore old Baguio charm

By Vincent Cabreza
Baguio City

MEMORIES OF couples walking through Baguio City's foggy evenings back in the 1970s are slowly fading, and with them the charm of a more sophisticated summer capital.

That, at least, is the prevailing view in tourism circles today.

But some of the old residents have another theory they have started to test: Baguio's charm is really "everlasting."

Old Ibaloi women and their children have been tending gardens that hope to grow every three months an abundant supply of everlasting flowers—the prickly variety known more for its attractive yellow array when strung together into garlands, than for its scent.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, the everlasting garland has been a staple for souvenir-hunting tourists, alongside the miniature sculpture "man-in-the-barrel," strawberries of Benguet, and the peanut brittle and jams of nuns of the Good Shepherd Convent.

But the garlands began to disappear from the main display areas of the public market.

The city government has been campaigning for a "return to old Baguio" as part of its commitment to the Baguio Centennial in 2009.

Old memories

Local tourism relies too much on the old memories to keep the summer capital alive.



EVERLASTING flowers used to be a top seller among Baguio tourists.

ELMER KRISTIAN DAUIGYO

Tourism Undersecretary Eduardo Jarque Jr. recalls his own memories about dating his wife in Baguio to stress why—to the contemporary tourist—the summer capital today has a lackluster image.

"But let us not be lulled. Tourism has always been a numbers game," Jarque says.

He says communities have already proven that a place's attraction often transcends what it can provide in terms of good roads or the number of hotels with hot running water.

He says the sophisticated Baguio can "do a Batanes" by drawing "special tourists" who are attracted to its snob appeal.

City tourism officer Benedicto Alhambra, however, says conserving what made Baguio memorable to tourists must be its direction. He asks the women of the Indayog ti Sabong (Shower of Flowers) movement to revive the everlasting gardens behind the Baguio Convention Center.

The women took up the challenge because they knew that everlasting garlands never really disappeared from the market,

"just from the memories of Metro Manila visitors," says Marissa Butale, 29.

Butale supervises and teaches the women about the best ways to tend to their patches.

Sense of history

She also provides the project its sense of history. "I grew up raising flowers for my parents in Lamtang village [in neighboring La Trinidad, Benguet], and I always associated everlasting with the tourists," she says.

She spent her youth stringing everlasting flowers and selling them on the streets.

"To the Ibaloi, this flower has no cultural value. It is not part of the rituals and we don't really keep them in our houses like we do [with] roses today," she says.

"But I once saw visitors from [the lowlands] with their children, and I realized they wore their school uniforms with an everlasting pinned to their lapels. To them, the everlasting was magical."

"We have vegetable farms, but we often earn back our investments from the sale of garland pieces," Butale says.

time to plant and grow the everlasting. It takes us three months, and then we can sell them."

A family earns P50,000 each year from a 250-square-meter patch of everlasting.

These days, it is—of all places—Tondo, Manila, which is the steady buyer of Baguio everlasting.

"Tondo residents use everlasting in their annual fiestas, and we are their only source. Everlasting only blooms here. We tried planting the patch in Tagaytay City and Nueva Vizcaya, but they did not take well to warm weather," Butale says.

She often shows strangers her thumb as part of her lectures about the everlasting trade. The finger is bruised and marked with healed puncture wounds.

A garland of everlasting sells at P20 today, but retailers spend many hours stringing the flowers to avoid being pricked by their texture.

"I think this is one reason only a few continue selling the garlands. I have been doing this for years, yet I need about 15 minutes to string together four garland pieces," Butale says.

Photographer returns to first love for healing

By Tonette Orejas
Angeles City

SIMPLE LA MU (They are only simple). Nothing spectacular about them."

Mario Pamintuan, called the "master of frontal attack" in the art of photography in the 1980s, tends to belittle his current output of 38 color photographs. He has reasons.

Pamintuan hasn't touched a shutter button since his last exhibit in 1999, selling all his Nikon and Mamiya systems even because, he thought, "mate na ku (I will die soon)."

Then, too, he returned to his first love by using only a point-and-shoot digital camera—the modern version of the "Instamatic" that he had not ever touched in his younger days.

He was rather uneasy with the shift. When he was 12 years old, Rolleiflex was his camera, a hand-me-down from his father Alberto, chief of the photo department of the defunct Clark Air Base from 1948 to the late 1950s.

He plunged back to photography, not for the art of it or an attempt to reestablish himself. It is chiefly for healing the body of this 56-year-old image hunter.



PAMINTUAN

TONETTE OREJAS

"I was trying to beat boredom out of my kidney problem. If I didn't die of that or its complications, I'll die of depression," Pamintuan says as his assistant of 20 years, Mike, mounts the photographs on the walls of Galleria Olivia at Camalig Restaurant in Angeles City.

"Angeles Mornings" is Pamintuan's sixth solo exhibit since 1977. He pooled the collection from photographs he had taken between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. almost daily since returning from the United States in September.

As in past forays, his haunts found him in familiar nooks and places in the city he called after his wife Linda, "beloved."

Frozen in frames, the images are all of common folk in common situations.

An almost toothless old man stares from the steel gates of the Sto. Rosario Church. A *tinapa* (smoked fish) maker waits for takers of his trays of smoked fish. A young salesgirl stands beside six pairs of bikini. A gray-haired man sells colorful *suekos* (wooden clogs). Neighbors eat around a *tienda* of *arroz caldo*. Young boys laugh at the antic of a friend showing off his uncircumcised part.

In perfect timing, Pamintuan captures the joy, exuberance, haughtiness, gloom, uneasiness and unpretentiousness of people and life in his city.

To the observation that he lifts the ordinariness out of his subjects, he says: "Ay wa, yang buri ku (Yes, that's what I like to do)."

"Angeles Mornings" runs until Jan. 9, 2008, at the Galleria Olivia, Camalig Restaurant, Sto. Rosario Street, Angeles City.

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NEWSBRIEFS

Sayyaf frees 2 captives

ZAMBOANGA CITY—The Abu Sayyaf in Sulu on Monday set free their two hostages, who were abducted in Patikul town on Dec. 13, after two local executives exerted pressure on the bandit group.

Rolando Benitez, 48, and Edmar Molina, 35, were recovered along Barangay Km. 20 in Patikul around 9 p.m.

The victims work for Panglima Estino Mayor Munib Estino.

"This is the first time that the bandits did not harm their Christian victims," Estino said.

On April 17, seven workers of former Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong were beheaded by the bandits in Parang town after their demand for a P5-million ransom was rejected.

Estino said he and Patikul Mayor Kabir Elias Hayudini used "soft and hard approaches" in the safe recovery of the victims.

Julie Alpala, Inquirer Mindanao

Mobile IT classroom launched

STUDENTS of remote Siargao and Bucas Grande Islands will now have access to information technology through a mobile IT classroom made possible by a congressman.

Rep. Francisco Matugas launched the mobile IT classroom in the two areas recently.

Matugas, chair of the board of trustees of the Siargao Island Institute of Technology (SIIT), turned over the IT classroom to the SIIT during the school's 11th founding anniversary.

Matugas, in a press statement, said he received a symbolic key to the bus that was converted into the mobile IT classroom.

The air-conditioned bus is equipped with 20 laptops, an LCD projector, VCD player, CDs and sound system.

It was a joint project of Matugas and the Department of Science and Technology. Matugas has pledged his personal funds for the operation and maintenance of the mobile classroom, including Internet connection.

Heist in telecoms office

DIGOS CITY—Armed men took off with more than P60,000 from a branch of the RCPI here past 1 p.m. Monday.

Marilyn Abiso, an RCPI employee, said they mistook the suspects for customers and decided to let them in even though they were having their lunch break.

Abiso said as soon as the suspects were allowed in, they immediately drew out their handguns and declared a robbery.

The lone security guard manning the RCPI branch was disarmed, she said.

Orlando Dinoy, Inquirer Mindanao

Youth poll recount ordered

TANGUB CITY—A court has ordered the suspension of elections for Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) federation officers here pending a recount of votes for the SK chair of Barangay Maquillao.

"This raised the possibility the city may not be able to elect a new set of SK federation officials toward the end of this year," Robiconceasar Agcopra, city local government operations officer, said.

Agcopra said Judge Rodolfo Vapor, of the Municipal Trial Court in Cities, issued a temporary restraining order (TRO), dated Dec. 3, against the holding of the SK federation elections.

The TRO, valid until Dec. 23, was based on a petition by Christine Abatayo against the proclamation of her rival, Jun Cris Aquaviva, for the chairmanship of the SK in Maquillao village.

Ryan D. Rosaura, Inquirer Mindanao

Gov gives cash gifts

MAASIN CITY—Southern Leyte Gov. Damian Mercado played Santa Claus as he gave out cash during the Christmas party of the provincial capitol, which was held last Friday.

After announcing that Capitol employees will receive P20,000 additional bonus, he also distributed cash to the employees and their children, including members of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan. Aside from the cash, they also received rice and sardines.

Calling all the employees to queue, he handed P200 in crisp 100 peso bills to each of the 700 employees. He then called the children, numbering more than 50, and handed P50 to each of them.

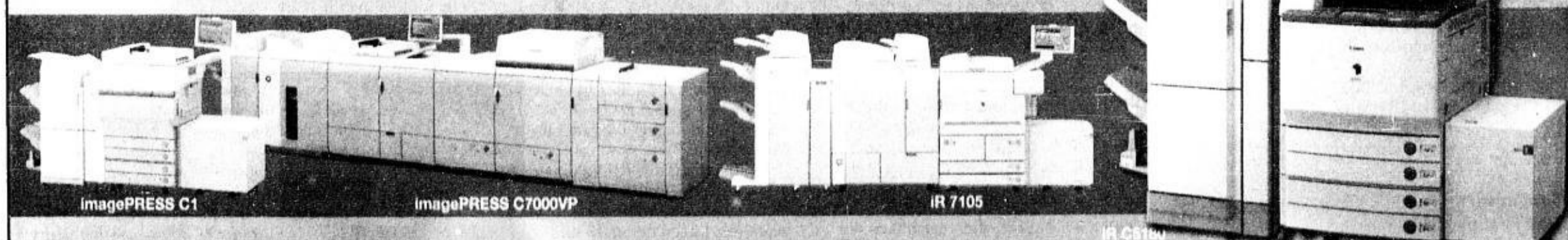
On the other hand, the provincial board members received P5,000 each. Mercado also raffled off four TV sets.

While the people were dancing, the governor threw into the air crisp 20 peso bills leaving everybody scrambling. This was done several times during the party.

Jani Arnaz, Inquirer Visayas

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House OKs cheaper meds bill

A PARTY-LIST REPRESENTATIVE has accused the United States Trade Representative's office here of attempting to influence the deliberations on the Cheaper Medicines Bill in the interest of transnational pharmaceutical companies, many of them US-based.

The consolidated HB 2844 was passed on third and final reading last night. In an unusual show of unity, all 205 congressmen present in plenary voted in favor of the measure.

Earlier, Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros yesterday distributed to reporters copies of a "position paper" that she claimed was being circulated by the US Trade Representative's office among members of the House committee on trade and industry that is steering the bill's passage through the House.

The committee, chaired by Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez, has consolidated 24 measures designed to increase the poor's access to medicines by, among other things, allowing parallel importation of patented medicines and revising the Intellectual Property Code which provides protection for holders of medicine patents.

The position paper contained comments and suggestions, purportedly coming from the US government, on how certain provisions of HB 2844 can be worded.

At a press briefing yesterday, Hontiveros said the US trade representative ought to be reminded that the Philippines "is not a colony of your country."

Shalimar Vitan, policy coordinator of the UK-based Oxfam international aid agency, said the document was also intended for the Philippines' Intellectual Property Office.

"This is the unseen hand" that is trying to influence the Cheaper Medicines Bill, Vitan told a press briefing.

Alvarez said he had been approached by the office of the US Trade Representative regarding its concerns about HB 2844.

He said the American Chamber of Commerce had also written to Speaker Jose de Venecia concerning the bill.

But Alvarez said "it was nothing. They just raised their concerns sometime ago, but I didn't mind them." *Christian V. Esguerra*

Transco: Done deal—Miriam

SENATORS DO NOT SEE ANY MAJOR ROAD-blocks to the takeover by the Monte Oro Grid Resources consortium of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) despite plans by the Senate to scrutinize the bidding.

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the bidding for the government's power transmission grid was "very open" and the subject of conflict of interest charges, businessman Enrique Razon, had declared he would divest his 2 percent interest in Monte Oro once the consortium won.

Monte Oro beat the rival bid of the group led by San Miguel Corp.'s Ramon Ang \$3.95 billion to \$3.905 billion.

"There should be no problem with that [an investigation] because there is a resolution anyway. Although there is a resolution, we should just go through the process," said Senate President Manny Villar.

Santiago, chair of the Joint Congressional Power Commission, said her main focus would be the conflict of interest issue between the auctioneer, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (Psalm) president Jose Ibazeta, and Razon. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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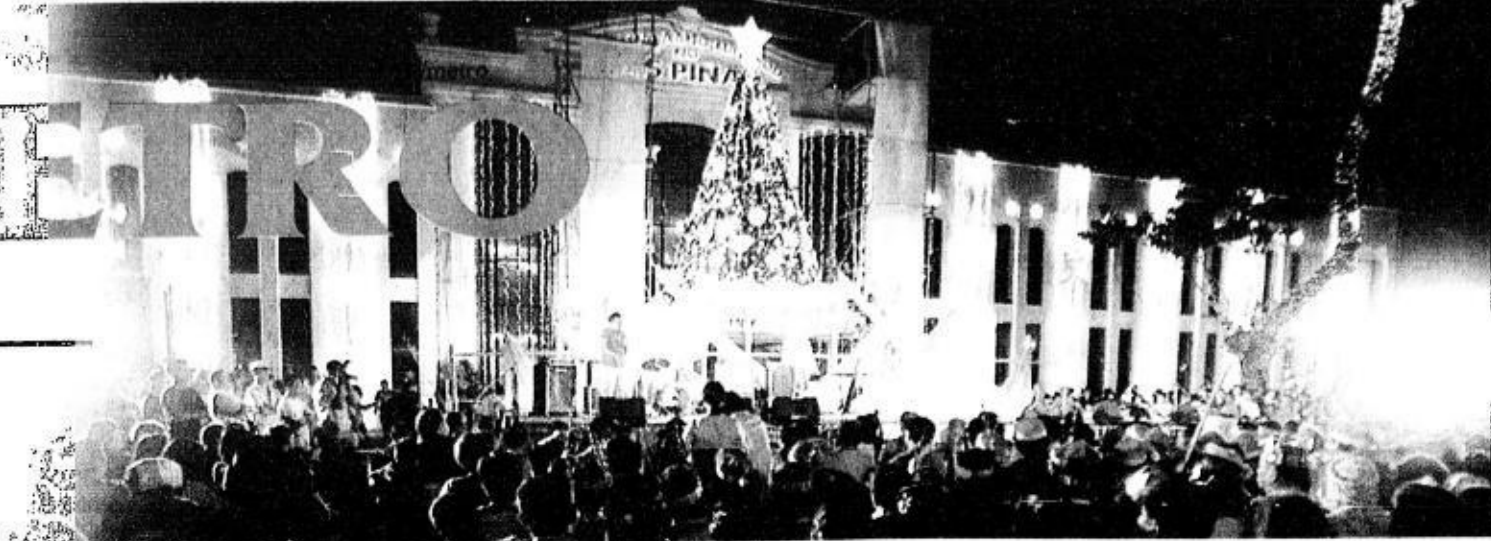
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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

GIANT TREE, GLITTERY LIGHTS
Residents of Las Piñas City celebrate during yesterday's ceremonial lighting of the giant Christmas tree at the City Hall grounds.

ROGER MARGALLO



Bunevacz seeks help from NBI

Ex-decathlete says partners hurt him

By Tina G. Santos

FORMER DECATHLETE DAVID BUNEVACZ HAS filed a complaint for physical injuries against four of his business associates whom he accused of manhandling him.

Bunevacz, president and chief executive officer of the Beverly Hills 6750 Cosmetic Surgery and Skin Institute—a beauty clinic on Ayala Avenue, Makati City which caters to the rich—filed the complaint in the National Bureau of Investigation on Dec. 5.

The following day, he and his wife, former talent manager Jessica Rodriguez who is in charge of promoting the clinic, left for the United States for what the couple called their annual Christmas vacation.

Bunevacz's complaint confirmed rumors that he was beaten up last month by men who allegedly wanted to question him about reports that he was misusing the clinic's funds.

Lawyer Sixto Burgos Jr., chief of the NBI Anti-Kidnapping, Hijacking and Armed Robbery Division, said it was Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla who had suggested that the couple seek the help of the bureau.

In his complaint, Bunevacz told the NBI that sometime last month, his business associates asked him to meet them in Greenhills, San Juan.

"He (Bunevacz) claimed that he was manhandled and they

boxed his ears," Sixto said. "He also alleged that the group forcibly took his Porsche, a watch worth P1 million and his cell phone."

According to Burgos, one of the men reportedly told Bunevacz in Filipino, "You'd better leave before anything bad happens to you."

He added that the couple had asked the NBI to provide them with security.

"With regards to the embezzlement issue, David said all the expenses he made were justified," Burgos told the media.

There have been reports that the couple's business partners had accused them of embezzling P20 million of the clinic's funds, citing as proof a check allegedly made out by Bunevacz which he used as a deposit on a luxury car worth P5.6 million that he gave to his wife. The check, the reports alleged, was a company check.

The couple would later confirm in a statement that there was a disagreement between them and their associates but added that they were trying to reach an amicable settlement, reports said.

The Bunevaczes also said they would return to the country next year.

4 Korean traders in hot water for unpaid bar bills

By Allison W. Lopez

A CITY COUNCILOR YESTERDAY filed estafa charges in the Manila Regional Trial Court against four Koreans who allegedly refused to pay the P54,000 bill they had racked up in his bar.

Manila Councilor Roderick Valbuena, who manages The Heart of Manila on Adriatico Street, Malate said Korean businessmen Song Byung Hoon, Choy Sy Yong, Kim Syun Tae and Seo Bum Sik went to the establishment on Dec. 15 and ordered food and liquor.

He added that several hours later, the four, who were already drunk, refused to pay their bill, saying it was "too much." They then tore several dollar bills in front of the bar personnel and manager.

When a waiter tried to pacify the group, Tae and Sik told him, "Who are you? F**k you Filipinos!" Valbuena said in his affidavit.

According to him, he approached the four Koreans, introduced himself as a Manila councilor and asked them what their complaint was. Hoon, however, reportedly made a rude gesture while saying, "You do not know me, f**k you councilor!" while his companions laughed.

Valbuena said his wife also tried to intervene but she was ignored and shoved aside by Yong.

At this point, the councilor said he called up the police who immediately arrested the Koreans.

"The actuations of these foreigners cannot be allowed in our country," Valbuena said. "It is only fitting that we prevent them from doing the same things against our countrymen. For this reason, I am filing a deportation case in the Bureau of Immigration against the aforementioned aliens for being undesirable aliens," he added.

THE DEPARTMENT of Labor and Employment, which has its head office in Intramuros, Manila, is the primary government agency tasked to promote employment opportunities, develop human resources, protect workers and maintain industrial peace.

It started as a small bureau in 1908 and became a department on Dec. 8, 1933 by virtue of Act 4121. It now has 16 regional offices, 34 overseas posts, six bureaus, seven staff services and 11 attached agencies, including the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, National Wages and Productivity Commission and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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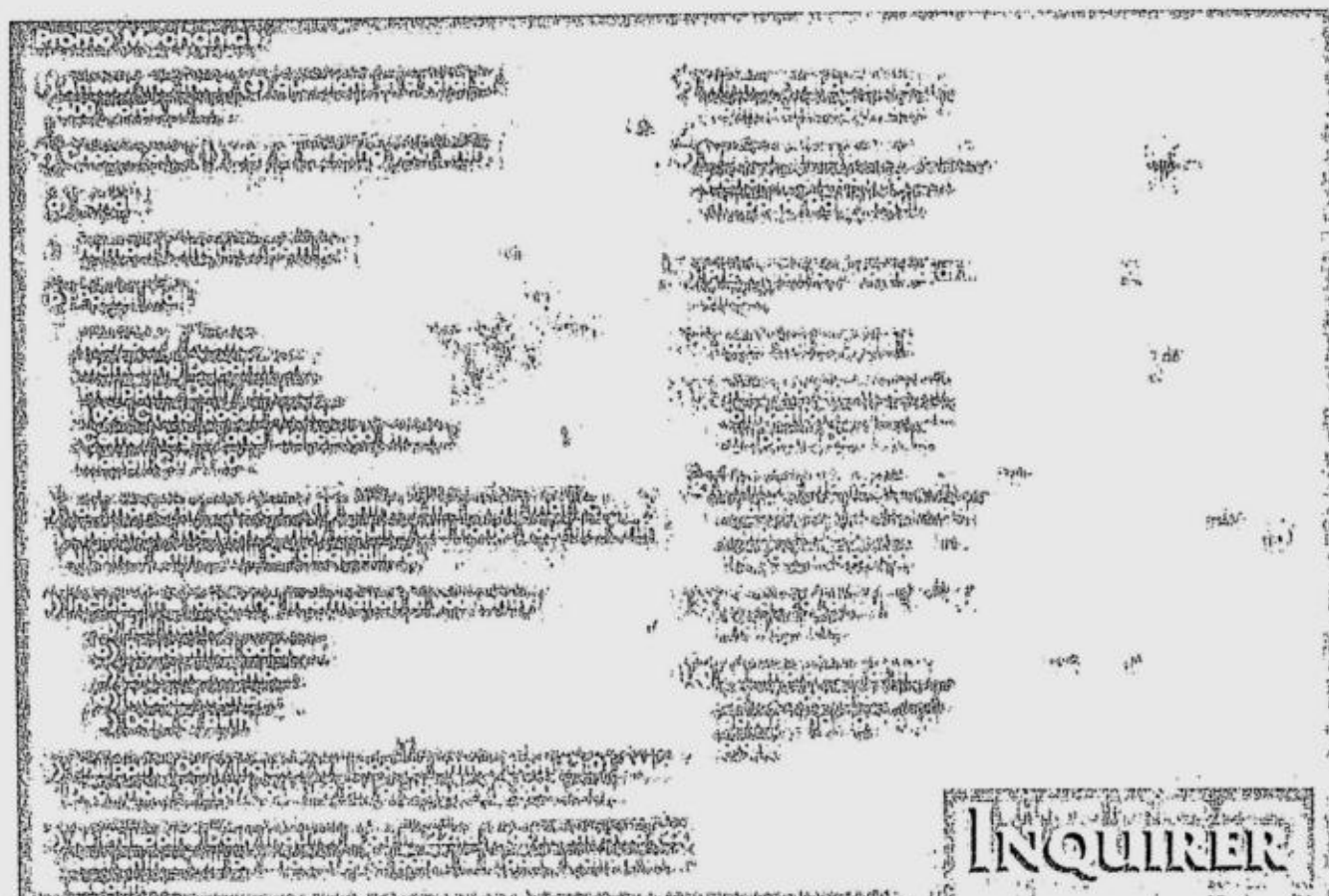


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A24

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

WEDNESDAY,
DECEMBER 19, 2007

Inventory of Pasig City ballot boxes underway

By Kristine L. Alave

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS YESTERDAY started its inventory of 1,317 ballot boxes from Pasig City after former Congressman Robert "Dodot" Jaworski Jr. and incumbent Mayor Robert Eusebio filed electoral protests against each other.

A team from the local Comelec office and watchers from the camps of Jaworski and Eusebio inspected and sealed the ballot boxes from the city's second district which were stocked at the ground floor of City Hall.

The inventory started around 10 a.m. yesterday, a day behind its original schedule.

Ma. Anne Gonzales, Pasig City's Comelec chief, said they expect the inventory to be finished by Dec. 20.

After that, the boxes would be transferred to the Comelec office in Manila where the Electoral Contests Adjudication Department would recount the votes.

Jaworski, who ran but lost in the mayoral race held last May 14, had requested the poll body to open and recount all of the

votes cast in the city's second district which has 1,067 precincts.

Eusebio, who was declared the winner, responded by filing a counter-protest. He asked the Comelec for a recount of the votes cast in the first district's 250 precincts.

Based on the Comelec's final tally, Eusebio garnered 116,463 votes against Jaworski's 107,141 votes.

Richard Nethercott, Jaworski's lawyer, said they would scrutinize the election returns from ballot boxes in Pinagbuhatan, Napico, Manggahan, Floodway and Maybunga, considered the largest and highly populated areas in the city.

They also have the biggest numbers of indigent residents in Pasig, city officials said.

"The returns from these places are questionable," Nethercott said, adding that these were the areas where Jaworski's legal team and watchers had witnessed "irregularities" during the canvassing.

Sixto Brillantes, Eusebio's lawyer, however, said that his client had won by a comfortable margin against Jaworski which was an indication of the people's support.

Woman in alleged title scam charged

By Tina G. Santos

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has filed a charge against a woman who was allegedly involved in a land title scam.

Charged with syndicated estafa in the Manila Prosecutor's Office was Amor Villegas, of Sta. Rosa Village, Malabon City.

However, the prosecutor downgraded the case to attempted estafa, which is a bailable offense. The suspect was released after posting bail, the NBI said.

The case stemmed from a complaint filed by three businesswoman identified as Marizon de la Cruz, Hydee Uy and Amy Go, who claimed they were duped by the suspect.

But lawyer Angelito Magno, chief of the NBI Special Action Unit, said they expect more victims to come forward and file com-

plaints against the suspects.

An investigation showed that sometime in 2005, Villegas, showing a certificate of title, offered De la Cruz an 11,400 sq m lot located in Malabon City. The complainant said she gave staggered cash payments to the suspect, who in turn, issued checks equivalent to the amount which the former shelled out.

However, when the complainant's payment reached more than P5 million, the suspect was nowhere to be found.

The complainant later found out that the lot title given to her by the suspect was fake, the NBI said, adding that the suspect even issued bouncing checks to De la Cruz.

This prompted the complainants to seek the help of the NBI which immediately formed a team for an entrapment operation.

METROBRIEFS

Vendor against vendor: I dead

POLICE are trying to determine why an ice cream vendor stabbed dead a fellow vendor at midnight yesterday in Taguig City. Authorities identified the victim as Manuel Espiritu, 24, a native of Marinduque and resident of Purok 13, South Daang Hari, Barangay Tanyag. SPO2 Gracio Cangco said that a witness saw Jessie Aviera, 28, running away from Espiritu's house at 12:20 a.m. yesterday, with blood on his hands and body. The witness said she immediately informed the police who arrested the suspect.

Julie M. Aurelio

Suspected car thief arrested

A MAN accused of stealing the sports utility vehicle of a retired Navy officer in Quezon City on Monday was arrested a few hours later in Bulacan. Operatives of the Quezon City Police District Anti-Carnapping Unit and the Bulacan police nabbed Cesar Poso, 31, a resident of Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, while he was driving a gray Ford Everest (RBS 627) on Monday in Balagtas, Bulacan. The vehicle, according to the police, had been taken from its owner, Orville Cruzata, several hours before. Operatives of the QCPD-ANCAR alerted other policemen in Bulacan and Pampanga who also started looking for the vehicle. Poso and the recovered SUV were later taken to the QCPD headquarters in Camp Karingal.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Ex-NBI confidential agent, 2 others charged

FORMER National Bureau of Investigation confidential agent Martin Soriano and two other investigators were charged at the Manila Regional Trial Court yesterday for failing to inform their fellow agents, whom they had arrested on drug charges, of their rights. Solicitor General Agnes Devanadera said there was probable cause to indict Soriano, who became controversial after being tied to kidnapping and drug charges. Also charged were intelligence agent Allan Santiago and special investigator Pio Palencia for violating Sec. 4 (a) of R.A. 7438, which prescribes the right of persons arrested to "remain silent and have a competent and independent counsel." Devanadera, however, dismissed the complaints of kidnapping, grave threats, coercion, unlawful arrest, incriminatory machinations, robbery and violation of Republic Act 6713 filed by NBI special investigator Clenio Calleja and former security guard Amador Lumbré against the three. According to the complainants, the three men arrested them on Aug. 25, 1997 in Manila and accused them of being drug pushers. Devanadera said there was reason to charge Soriano, Santiago and Palencia because the records did not show that they had informed the complainants of their rights.

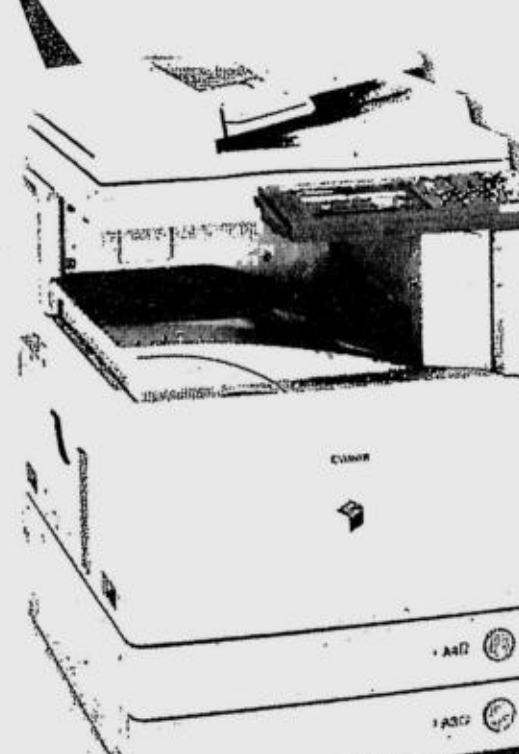

Allison W. Lopez

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Donors pledge \$7.4 B for Palestinians

PARIS—INTERNATIONAL DONORS PLEDGED \$7.4 billion to the Palestinians on Monday at a conference described by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as the "last hope" to save their government from bankruptcy.

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had formally asked donors meeting in Paris for \$5.6 billion by 2010 to help fulfill his plan to develop a viable economy for a future state.

"The real winner is the Palestinian state," French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told

AFP as he announced that a total of \$7.4 billion had been promised.

The pledges were made at a one-day conference convened to agree a package of aid to stabilize the Palestinian economy and shore up peace efforts with Israel.

"We see this conference as an

important vote of confidence on the part of the international community," Fayyad said as the conference wrapped up.

But Islamist group Hamas, which seized control of the Gaza Strip in June and was not invited to Paris nor to a meeting in the US city of Annapolis last month, labelled it a "dangerous conspiracy" aimed at dividing the Palestinians.

"We support all forms of aid, financial or otherwise, to the Palestinian people. But the Paris conference is coating poison with

honey and is a dangerous conspiracy," Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhum said in a statement released in Gaza.

Some humanitarian groups questioned the benefit of such a massive aid package.

In London, the development charity Oxfam warned donors were pouring cash "into a leaking bucket," arguing that aid efforts already in place were being seriously hampered by Israeli restrictions on movement.

"The challenge is to fix the leak, not pour faster ... Due to Is-

rael's movement restrictions and the blockade of Gaza, millions of dollars of aid for Palestinians are being lost," Oxfam's Middle East director Adam Leach said.

But Tony Blair, Middle East envoy for the diplomatic "Quartet," said the money would be used for "building the capacity and the institutions for the (Palestinian) state." "Over the next few months what we have got to show to people is that we are capable of making the difference on the ground," he said.

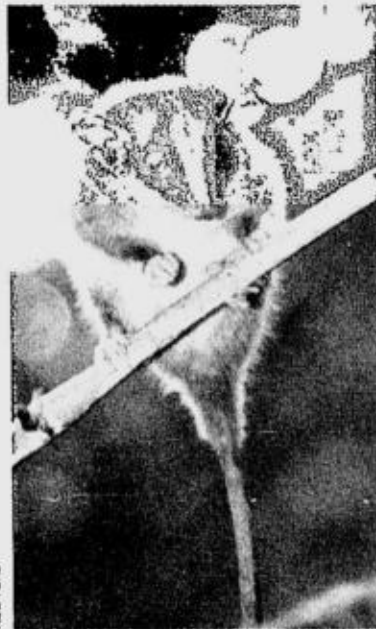
Palestinian President Mahmud

Abbas had earlier warned the almost 90 delegations that the West Bank and Gaza were facing a "total catastrophe" without their aid.

Pledges quickly came pouring in with Rice announcing a US donation of \$555 million for 2008, including \$150 million for budget support.

"The Palestinian Authority is experiencing a serious budgetary crisis. This conference is literally the government's last hope to avoid bankruptcy," Rice said.

AFP



MAMMALOGIST Martua Sinaga (left photo) holds a Mallomys giant rat that was found in the Foja Mountains in Indonesia's Papua province. At right is a pygmy possum found in the same place.

Giant rat, tiny possum discovered in Indonesia

JAKARTA—RESEARCHERS IN a remote jungle in Indonesia have discovered a giant rat and a tiny possum that are apparently new to science, underscoring the stunning biodiversity of the Southeast Asian nation, scientists said on Monday.

Unearthing new species of mammals in the 21st century is considered very rare. The discoveries by a team of American and Indonesian scientists are being studied further to confirm their status.

The animals were found in the Foja mountains rainforest in eastern Papua province in a June expedition, said US-based Conservation International, which organized the trip along with the Indonesian Institute of Science.

"The giant rat is about five times the size of a typical city rat," said Kristofer Helgen, a scientist with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. "With no fear of

humans, it apparently came into the camp several times during the trip."

The possum was described as "one of the worlds smallest marsupials."

A 2006 expedition to the same stretch of jungle—dubbed by Conservation International as a "Lost World" because until then humans had rarely visited it—unearthed scores of exotic new species of palms, butterflies and palms.

Papua has some of the world's largest tracts of rainforest, but like elsewhere in Indonesia they are being ravaged by illegal logging. Scientists said last year that the Foja area was not under immediate threat, largely because it was so remote.

"It's comforting to know that there is a place on Earth so isolated that it remains the absolute realm of wild nature," said expedition leader Bruce Beehler. AP

Castro says he won't cling to office

HAVANA—AILING CUBAN leader Fidel Castro said in a letter read on television on Monday that he would not cling to office or obstruct the rise of a new generation of leaders, raising speculation about his political future.

"My basic duty is not to cling to office, nor even more so to obstruct the rise of people much younger, but to pass on experiences and ideas whose modest value arises from the exceptional era in which I lived," said Castro, who stepped aside from Cuba's presidency "temporarily" more than 16 months ago after undergoing surgery.

Castro, 81, appeared to hint



CASTRO

in his letter that he would leave the country's top leadership to his brother Raul Castro, 76, who has served as interim leader since July 31, 2006.

Castro has not been seen in

public other than on television since his surgery, but weekly opinion pieces of his on global affairs have been published in Cuba's newspapers since March.

Questions about his political future arose after he was nominated as a candidate to the National Assembly earlier this month, making him officially eligible to resume the presidency if he should be elected to the assembly in January.

Cuban officials have said Fidel Castro keeps up with official business while he is recovering in an undisclosed location, but there has been no official indication of whether or when he would resume the

presidency.

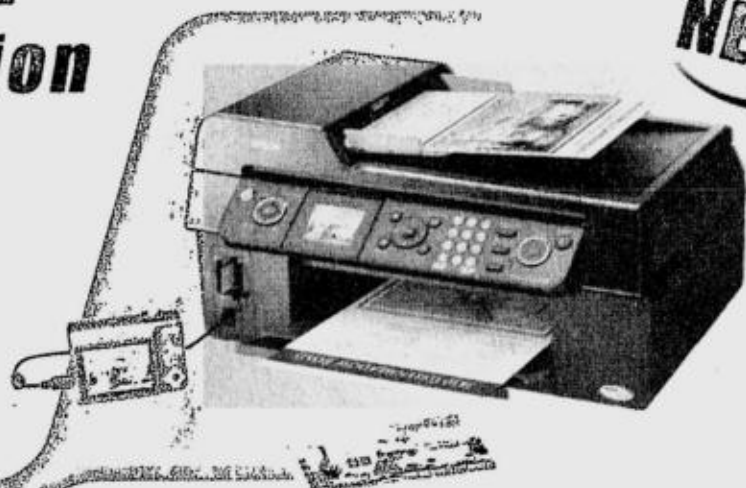
Nor has there been any clear information about the state of his health during his lengthy convalescence.

In his letter, Fidel Castro said he fully concurred with Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who just turned 100, in that "you have to stick to your principles till the end." He said he was "deeply convinced" that the problems now facing Cuba require more solutions "than those contained in a chessboard." "Not even a single detail can be overlooked, and it is never an easy task when human intelligence in a revolutionary society is called to prevail over its instincts." AFP

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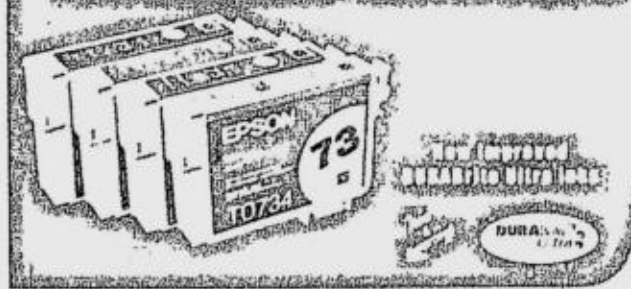


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WORLD BRIEFS

Test missile shot down

TOKYO—Japan said on Tuesday that it had successfully shot down a ballistic missile over the Pacific as part of joint efforts with the United States to erect a shield against possible attacks from North Korea. Japan tested the US-developed Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) interceptor from a warship in waters off Hawaii, becoming the first US ally to successfully intercept a target using the system. AFP

Mob arrests

ROME—Police in Italy and Germany on Tuesday arrested four members of an Italian crime family linked to the execution-style killings of six Italians in Germany last August. A police statement said two of the arrests were made in Germany and the other two in Calabria, the poor southern Italian region that is home to the Ndrangheta crime group, the area's version of the Sicilian Mafia. Reuters

Protests vs China

BEIJING—China on Tuesday said it was "highly concerned" at anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam, after the second rally in a month there over rival claims in the South China Sea. Several hundred people marched in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on Sunday in the long-simmering dispute over the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos in the South China Sea. AFP

Troop incursion

ARBIL, IRAQ—A group of 300 Turkish troops crossed into Kurdish territory in northern Iraq overnight and moved 2-3 kilometers deeper into Iraq on Tuesday morning, a senior Iraqi military source told Reuters. The source said the Turkish troops were lightly armed and had moved into the Gall Rash area, a mountainous district near the border. There were no reports of clashes, the source said. Reuters

Norway plans 1st shipping tunnel

OSLO—NORWAY has drawn up plans to build the world's first shipping tunnel which would save time and money for vessels passing through a coastal area known for its dangerous seas.

Strong winds, high waves and powerful currents in the area of Stad on the southwest coast of Norway cause long delays while ships wait for calmer conditions.

A recent report from the Norwegian Coastal Administration recommended building the 1,700-meter (5,577 feet) tunnel and concluded that it would be cost effective.

The tunnel, estimated to cost around \$310 million and take five years to build, would cut through a peninsula, saving ships the risky journey around the coastline. Reuters

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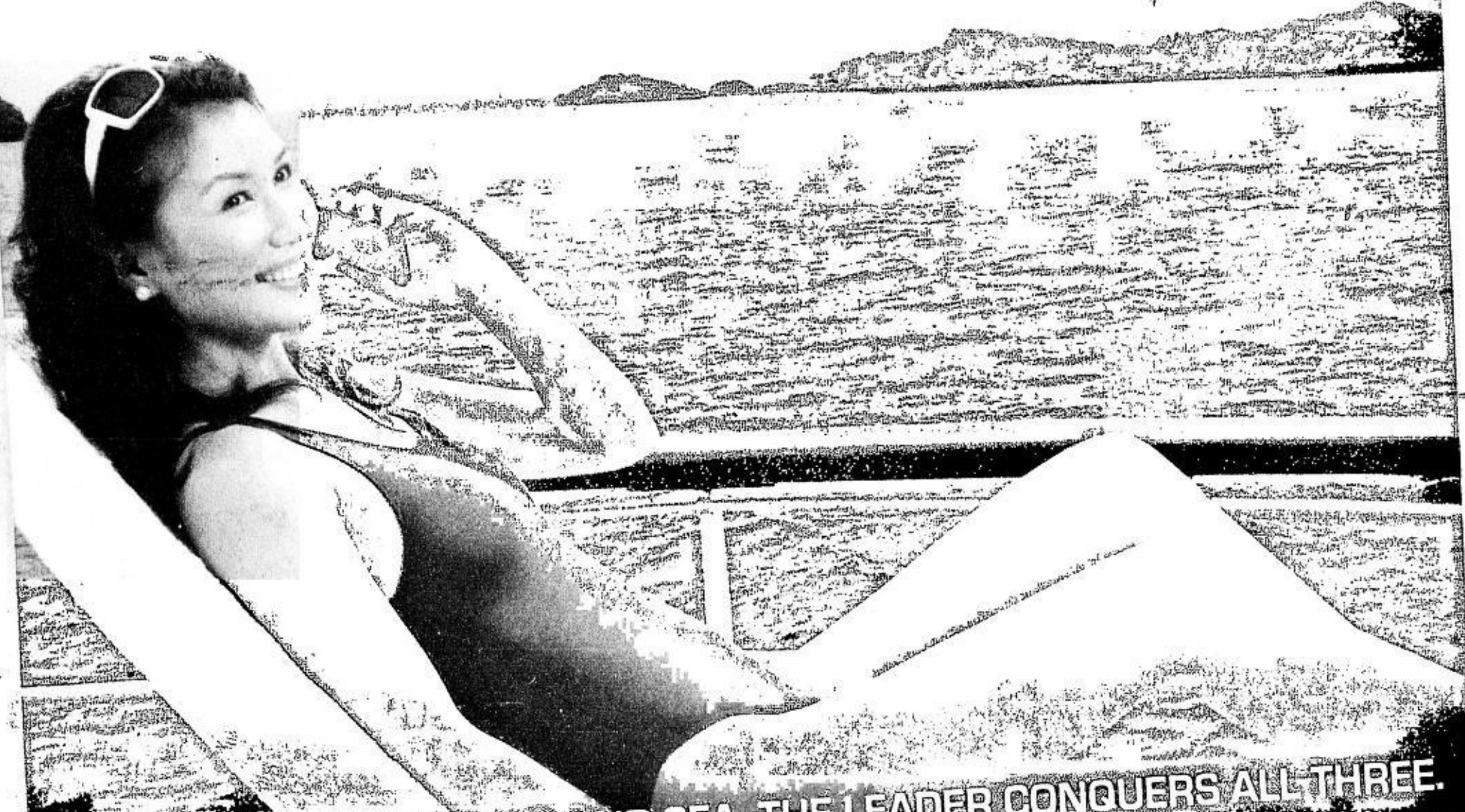
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SAN Mig Coffee's Glen Balocon drives off Elmer Espiritu of Pharex in yesterday's game.

San Mig makes s'finals

Mail & More forges KO tiff

By Marc Anthony Reyes

SAN MIG COFFEE LEANED ON THE BROAD shoulders of Claiford Arao and Sam Ekwe to finish off Pharex, 77-65, last night and barge into the semifinals of the 2008 PBL V-Go Extreme Energy Cup at the Arena in San Juan City.

GAME TODAY
(The Arena, San Juan)
3 p.m.—Mail & More
vs Toyota
Balintawak

The 6-foot-5 Arao scored 10 of his 11 points to ignite a 16-2 first-half blast that gave San Mig Coffee a 36-31 lead. Then the 6-foot-8 Ekwe

took over, scattering 14 of his 20 points in the third quarter to pad the Coffee Kings' edge to 57-49.

With the victory, San Mig arranged a semifinal duel with Harbour Centre starting tomorrow at the Rizal Coliseum.

Earlier, Kiel Misa buried a three-pointer and four free throws in the dying seconds to resuscitate Mail & More's bid with a 69-62 victory over Toyota Balintawak.

The peppery 5-foot-8 guard from Perpetual Help knocked in the pivotal points in the last 15 seconds to frustrate the efforts of the Roadkings, who frantically tried to catch up through Cholo Villanueva.

The Comets thus gained a chance to overhaul the Roadkings' twice-to-beat edge and make the semifinals in a knockout match today also at the Arena.

"There is still no reason to celebrate because our mission is not yet finished," said Mail & More coach Allan Gregorio. "But I'm happy that we matched their intensity and passion and we got the needed breaks late in the game."

The scores:
First Game
MAIL & MORE 69—David 13, Misa 10, Santos 8, Arelano 8, Gregorio 8, Baracael 8, Bravo 8, Bonus 5, Ballesteros 1, Co 0, Masbang 0.

TOYOTA BALINTAWAK 62—Aldave 10, Sta. Maria 10, Faundo 9, Villanueva 8, Jazul 6, Dedicatoria 6, Casio 5, Jaime 4, Sena 2, Guerrero 2, Rodriguez 0.

Quarters: 19-13, 39-39, 52-49, 69-62
Second Game
SAN MIG 77—Ekwe 20, Raneses 13, Bolocon 11, Arao 11, Custodio 9, Escobar 6, Pascual 4, Dela Pena 3, Meno 0, Saldua 0.

PHAREX 65—Alfad 12, Bulawan 11, Allera 10, Oreta 8, Co 8, Espiritu 7, Matias 6, Latoreno 3, Aquino 0, De Guzman 0, Yambao 0.

Quarters: 10-19, 36-31, 57-49, 77-65

PBA: Aces battle Realtors /A28

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La Salle-Ateneo golf duel fires off today

LA SALLE IS GUNNING FOR A THIRD straight win but formidable Ateneo has lain a warning trap: The "enemy" is in for a big surprise.

Which side gets the last laugh and the bragging rights after three days of team golf will be known starting today when La Salle and Ateneo collide in their annual Match Play 2007 at Tagaytay Midlands.

"We're strong enough to shoot for a third straight win," said La Salle captain Freddie Mendoza on the eve of the Ryder Cup-style event, a rivalry so intense both schools tapped their best talents to ensure victory.

"Our friends on the other side are in for a big surprise," warned Ateneo skipper Teboy Javier.

Mendoza and Javier were both evasive when asked who they will field against the other side's players in the first round.

Six foursomes and as many four-ball matches are scheduled in each of the first two rounds of the three-day event, the pivotal stage both teams want to dominate to gain breathing room going into the crucial



TANPINCO



FERNANDO

singles matches Friday.

The event, organized and hosted by Belle Corp. and Tagaytay Highlands in cooperation with the De La Salle Alumni Association Golf Club and the Ateneo Golf Foundation, officially kicked off last night with the parade of teams and traditional hitting of the ceremonial drive.

After losing in the inaugural staging of the event in 2004 at Sherwood Hills, the Archers took the next two duels at Camp

John Hay and at Sherwood.

Tommy Manotoc, Francis Gaston, Miko Alejandro, Justin Tambunting, Jenz Teczon and SEA Games silver medalist Anya Tanpinco banner La Salle's squad along with King Stehmeier, JP Reyes, Marco Olives, Justin Limjap, Miko Yee, Oliver Gan, Sammy Sy, Chucky Hong, Raffy Garcia, Chris Infante, Chepe Dulay, Ronnie Littua, Kim Hong, Yayi Escudero, Bobby Celestino, Bones Floro, Migs Garcia and Augie Palisoc.

Ateneo pins its hopes on reigning national amateur champion Anthony Fernando, Jeric Hechanova, Iggy Claveilla, Junjun Plana, Marcel Puyat and Jingy Tuason with support to come from Gab Atienza, Joel Bernaldez, Manoling Chan, Leana Farrales, Bayani Garcia, John Gobing, Katrina Gonzales, Lovelyn Guiguio, Marty Ilagan, Bobby Ifrigo, Pepot Ifrigo, Jovi Neri, Mikey Ozaeta, Don Padilla, Lino Retuerto, Mark Rivera, Benjie Sarmiento and Yoyong Velez.

Updated results will be posted at pilipinasgolf.com, the official website of INQUIRER Golf and Golf Digest Philippines.

Cavs gun down Bucks on James' milestone

CLEVELAND—LEBRON JAMES BECAME THE youngest player in NBA history to score 9,000 career points in helping the Cleveland Cavaliers edge the Milwaukee Bucks, 104-99, in double overtime on Monday.

The 22-year-old registered 31 points to boost his career total to 9,028, passing the milestone a year-and-a-half younger than Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers.

"It is an accomplishment," James told reporters. "It is the individual hard work that I put in during the summer time. It translates into what I do now on the court during the season."

"It is a credit to myself and to the guys I work out with in the offseason."

Zydrunas Ilgauskas scored the Cavaliers' first six points of the second overtime to seal the win. He finished with 24 points and 11 rebounds.

"We were concentrating so much on LeBron that we forgot about Zydrunas, and he shot the ball well," Bucks center Andrew Bogut said. "None of his buckets really were inside. When he shoots the ball like that, he's tough to stop."

In San Antonio, Texas, Grant Hill scored 22 points and Leandro Barbosa collected 18 as the Phoenix Suns beat San Antonio, 100-95, handing the Spurs their first home loss of the season.

It was the first meeting between the two teams since San Antonio eliminated the Suns in the NBA quarterfinals last season.

Barbosa and Amare Stoudemire combined to score 14 points in the fourth quarter. Stoudemire also finished in double figures with 17 points.

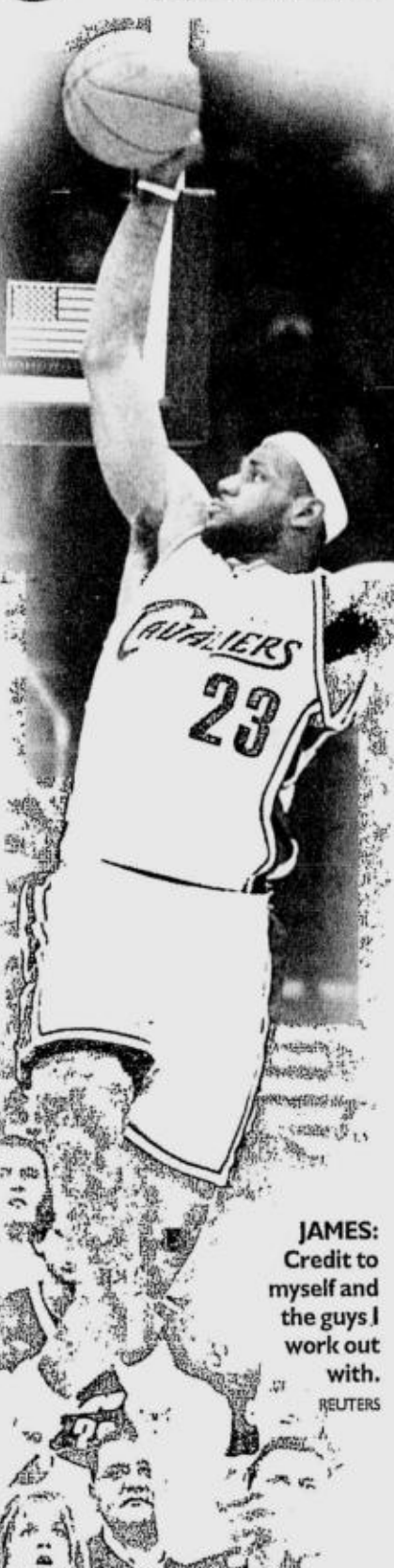
"It was definitely fun to play the last two minutes. It was high intensity, and a playoff atmosphere," Stoudemire said. "And when you get play-off atmosphere game in December, you know it's fun to play."

Tim Duncan nearly had a double-double in the first quarter alone, with 10 points and eight rebounds. His 36 points and 17 rebounds were both season-highs.

"He got going, and we tried to start throwing some different looks at him. He's the best. He's great," Phoenix forward Grant Hill said.

Steve Nash was held scoreless in the first half on zero-for-three shooting. His first field goal came with 8:34 left in the third quarter, and he finished with 10 points and 10 assists.

Without France's Tony Parker in the lineup for the third straight game, the Spurs



JAMES: Credit to myself and the guys I work out with. REUTERS

needed Duncan's effort to even stay close, as the rest of the starters combined to score 33 points. San Antonio is 1-2 without Parker in the lineup.

"Of course we miss Tony Parker. He's one of our best players," Duncan said. "We miss him offensively and for the way he attacks and breaks people down. You never know how having him out there and having those things available to us would have changed things tonight."

In other games, Atlanta tripped Utah, 116-111; Indiana waylaid New York, 119-92; Miami edged Minnesota, 91-87; Golden State defeated Memphis, 125-117; Dallas nipped Orlando, 111-108 and Portland hammered New Orleans, 88-76.

In Miami, Dwyane Wade survived a horrendous shooting night to score 30 points, Udonis Haslem added 18 and Miami finally found a way to win at home.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 15 points and added eight rebounds before fouling out for Miami (7-17), which won for only the third time in 11 home games.

Wade shot 6-for-22, including 10 straight misses in one stretch. But he had 14 points in the final quarter, when Miami needed him most.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Stephen Jackson had 28 points and 12 rebounds, and Monta Ellis added 23 points to help Golden State end a three-game road losing streak.

The Golden State victory overshadowed 32 points from Memphis forward Rudy Gay, the second consecutive game in which he has surpassed 30.

Baron Davis finished with 22 points and eight assists, and Al Harrington added 17 points. Kelenia Azubuike scored 15 for Golden State.

In Portland, Oregon, Brandon Roy had 24 points and eight assists to lead Portland over New Orleans for its eighth straight victory.

David West had 21 points and Tyson Chandler had 16 points and 19 rebounds for the Hornets, who lost for the fourth straight time at the Rose Garden.

Martell Webster had 13 points and Steve Blake had 10 for the Blazers. Chris Paul had 11 points and eight rebounds for New Orleans. Rasual Butler had 10.

Reuters, AP, AP

Dimakiling shares third round lead

Standings after Round 3:
3.0 points—IM O. Dimakiling (RP), GM Z. Azmaiparashvili (GEO); 2.5—IM J. Sadorra (RP), GM Dao T.H. (VIE), IM Grinatala P.D.S. (IND), R.R. Laxman (IND), Shen S. (CHN), Wang L. (CHN); 2.0—GM M. Paragua (RP), IM J. Gonzales (RP), IM E. Paciencia (RP), GM Zhang Z. (SIN), GM Wu S. (SIN), GM S. Chanda (IND), GM S. Megaranto (INA), GM Nguyen A.D. (VIE), GM Li R. (CHN), Lin C. (CHN), Wan Y. (CHN)

FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL MASTER Oliver Dimakiling downed two untitled Chinese in the second and third rounds to share the lead in the 4th Singapore Masters International Open Tournament 2007.

Dimakiling, the Davao City ace who has an Elo rating of 2491, first whipped Lin Chen (2363) late Monday night, then outplayed Wan Yunguo Tuesday morning.

He sealed a fourth-round clash with his co-leader, Georgian Grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2606), who

trounced woman GM Li Ruofan (2417) of China.

"I hope to do well here and gain a possible GM norm," Dimakiling, winner over Hong Kong WGM Anya Korke (2210) in the opening round Monday, said in a text message.

Azmaiparashvili also thwarted Filipino IM Enrique Paciencia, who took the scalp of the third-seeded Indian GM Chanda Sandipan (2593) in the second round.

GM Mark Paragua bowed to Wan in the second round and was stuck at 2 points in a tie with 10 others, including compatriots Paciencia and IM Jason Gonzales.

New IM Julio Sadorra beat WIM Irine Kharisma Sukandar of Indonesia and FM Graham Chua of Singapore to lead the 2.5 pointers.

Paragua demolished WGM Korke in the third round. Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

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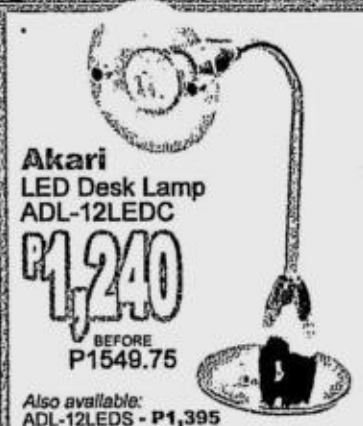
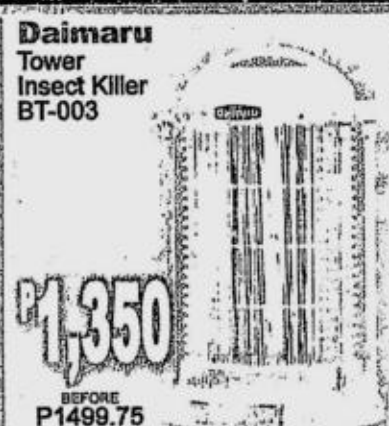
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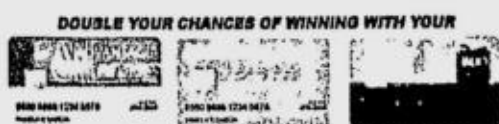
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See Poster Mechanics for Details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5410, Series of 2007

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BUSINESS

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Gov't posts record budget surplus of P54.1B

P90B from privatization covers collection shortfall

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT posted its highest ever budget surplus of P54.1 billion in November, aided by

revenues generated from the sale of a big-ticket power asset.

This brought the government's budget position for the first 11 months of the year to a surplus of P12.6 billion—a huge swing from a deficit of P58.3 billion recorded in the same period last year.

"There is a fighting chance that we may end up with a balanced budget this year," Finance Secretary Margaritho Teves said yesterday.

Should this happen, the Philippines would be a year ahead of its target of wiping out the budget deficit. The government originally meant to

balance the budget by 2008, or after 10 years of being in the red.

For this year, the government was supposed to reduce the deficit to P63 billion from last year's P64.8 billion.

An overperformance in this year's fiscal target was expected largely because

GOV'T/B7



TEVES

'Pocket open skies' pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS Council yesterday urged local airlines to support a proposed executive order that provides for "pocket open skies," saying this would benefit growth since it would apply only to the Clark airport.

Meneleo J. Carlos Jr., the NCC's champion for a seamless infrastructure network, said in an interview that the government-private sector body was ready with its proposed EO 500B, which is expected to boost in-bound budget tourism, which would have a domino effect on the domestic sector.

Carlos explained that as proposed, EO 500B would offer limited air rights to foreign carriers, namely the third and fourth freedoms of the air—that right to carry passengers from one's country to another and the right to bring them in from one country to one's own.

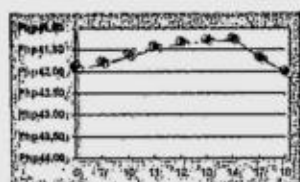
"These would be for six months and, if there are no serious (contrary developments), the fifth freedom may be implemented but only at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport," he said.

Carlos explained that the fifth freedom—also referred to in the aviation industry as "connecting flight"—meant full open skies as this allows airlines to carry passengers from one's country to another, and onward to a third.

"The original EO 500 provided the fifth freedom and we have seen its benefits," he said. "Unfortunately this was rescinded through EO 500A."

POCKET/B2

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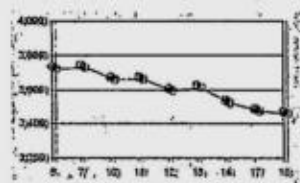
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DECEMBER

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks down on US worries

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.5-PERCENT lower yesterday as encouraging domestic economic news failed to fully dispel lingering worries over the faltering US economy, dealers said.

The composite index ended down 18.61 points to 3,470.21 after falling by up to 2.1 percent earlier in the day.

The broader all-share index fell 10.82 points to 2,136.18.

There were 66 decliners and 41 advancers, while 59 were unchanged.

A total of 2.1 billion shares valued at P5.3 billion changed hands.

"We may see a technical rebound tomorrow and some window-dressing before the holidays, but sentiment will remain negative in the near term given worries about stagflation in the US and a slowdown in Philippine economic growth next year," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities.

The selloff in the US markets continued Monday despite a Federal Reserve move to offer \$20 billion in 28-day credit to commercial banks to encourage them to borrow from the Fed and boost lending to businesses and consumers.

"Wall Street is looking quite weak as it wrestles with inflation and recession is-

STOCKS/B2

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Fuzion GLX	950,500	100,000	72,412	49,561	39,518	28,162	22,537	19,400		Lancer 1.6 GLX M/T	695,000	85,000	53,494	36,613	29,186	20,799	16,644	14,328	12,903	Adventure GLX - Diesel	773,000	70,000	58,740	40,204	32,059	22,847	18,283	15,739	14,174
Fuzion GLS Sport	1,150,000	130,000	87,657	59,995	47,837	34,090	27,281	23,485		Lancer 1.6 GLS CVT	768,000	90,000	58,539	40,066	31,947	22,766	18,219	15,684	14,124	Adventure GLS Sport - Diesel	840,000	70,000	64,115	43,882	34,989	24,934	19,954	17,177	15,469

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PRICE MONITORING

Costs of goods remain stable in run-up to holidays

By Ronnel W. Domingo
and Amy R. Remo

CHRISTMAS IS LESS THAN A week away, yet prices of goods remain stable, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

"Contrary to speculations, we have not seen any major upward movement in prices," Trade Secretary Peter B. Pavila said.

Citing the latest monitoring reports from the DTI and the Department of Agriculture, Pavila said that prices of basic goods such as canned meat, sardines, milk, coffee, soap and detergents have remained at lev-

els seen the previous month.

The trade chief said that, as for agricultural goods, prices of pork liempo and chicken have remained at P140 and P120, respectively.

Prices of refined and brown sugar went down by P2 a kilo and those of rice by P1.

Agriculture officials have assured the public that the spike of 3 to 10 percent in retail prices normally takes place during the Christmas season as a result of higher consumer demand. After the holidays, the prices will then revert to previous levels.

They likewise assured the pub-

lic that there is ample supply of agricultural produce, particularly that of chicken, this Christmas.

"We have sufficient supply of chicken for this month so consumers have no reason to worry about prices going beyond their normal holiday level," Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said. "It is normal for prices to go up slightly at this time given the seasonal increase in consumer demand."

He said chicken supply was adequate for the rest of the month as frozen inventories are currently pegged at seven million kilos.

"Such inventories are enough to meet the average consumer demand of 22 million kilos in the metropolis," he added.

Tracing the market price pattern since 2005, Yap noted that market rates of chicken normally go up by as much as 10 percent during the season.

Monitoring teams deployed by the DA showed that dressed chicken was selling for an average of P115 to P120 per kilo in Metro Manila markets during the weekend.

Already, Yap had secured commitments from industry

COSTS/B7

GSIS: Punish the villain, not the victim

A YOUNG MAN (LET US CALL him Jerry), fresh out of college, enters government service. On the day his employment status becomes permanent, he is compulsorily insured by the Government Service Insurance System.

Under the Endowment at 65 policy, Jerry pays a level annual premium until age 65. If he dies before 65, his beneficiary receives the full sum insured less any outstanding loans. If he reaches 65, he can choose to receive a monthly pension.

Every payday, Jerry's share of the premium is deducted from his salary. He has no say about the insurance transaction. It is required by law.

Anyway, he welcomes the deduction. It is only about 40 percent of total premium. The balance of about 60 percent is a fringe benefit paid by his employer. It is also the duty of the employer to remit everything to GSIS.

The law guarantees that the money Jerry and his employer

QUESTIONS
OF POLICIESHonesto C.
General

pays to GSIS, including the earnings thereon, will be returned in the form of death, disability and pension benefits, according to strict actuarial equations specified in the law.

After 45 years of faithful and efficient service to the government, Jerry files for retirement. By God's grace, Jerry is healthy and is looking forward to a well-earned life of ease reserved for senior citizens.

To his utter consternation, Jerry is told that he missed paying a few monthly premiums. The shortage will have to be deducted from his pension. He cannot prove his payments because he did not keep a complete file of his pay slips. The amount in question is not much, but he is enraged.

Because coverage with GSIS

is compulsory on the part of Jerry, receipts should not be needed to prove his payments. Somebody else is responsible for the shortage.

The law is clear. The head of office, treasurer, finance officer, cashier, disbursing officer, budget officer or other official or employee who fails or refuses to remit or delays remittances by more than 30 days is subject to a jail term of as much as 6 years and a fine of as much as P6,000, and are barred forever from holding public office or practicing a profession requiring a government license.

Also, the employer is the collecting agent of GSIS. Failure of the agent to collect and/or remit the premium should not be the fault of Jerry.

Finally, listen to this: The law goes on to say that failure of the members of the GSIS Board, including the chair

and vice chair, to collect unpaid premiums, among other debts, shall subject them to imprisonment of at least six months and not more than one year, and a fine of at least P5,000 and not more than P10,000, without prejudice to any other civil or administrative liability.

When the supposedly unpaid premium is deducted from Jerry's pension, GSIS is punishing the victim. What GSIS should do, instead, is to punish the villains. Surely, there are a lot of these dirty characters crawling around the premises.

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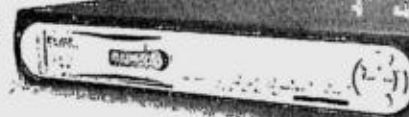
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29 SEPTEMBER 1926 in Claveria, Cagayan
15 DECEMBER 2007 in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga

Assistant Solicitor General, retired in 1991
University of the Philippines, College of Law, Class 1952
Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity, University of the Philippines
Past President, Rotary Club of Southern Pampanga
Past President, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Pampanga Chapter

Ester Lingad Andin

Ma. Gilda[†]
Ma. Fides [Daks] and Alexander
Ma. Agnes [Gor] and Leo[†]
Ma. Eliza [Ando]
Zoilo Jr. [Boyett] and Diane
Ma. Perla Joyce [Peia]
Elmer [Tolong] and Rowena
Cecil [TI] and Ethel

Ma. Rosa Carmela, Zoilo Alexander Miguel, and Ma. Ana Patricia
Natasha and Lisa Nicole
Jan Christian, Jenny Cid and Jan Michael Eli
Alphonso Rafael and Zoe Arianna
Eduardo Luis and Mikaela Louise
Cyrus John and Tyler James

His remains lie in state at the Sampaguita and Orchid Rooms,
Good Shepherd Memorial Park
at MacArthur Highway, Dolores, City of San Fernando, Pampanga.

Interment shall be on Thursday 20 December 2007
immediately following the 9 a.m. mass.

Don't grieve for me, for now I am free. I am following the path God laid for me, I took His hand when I heard Him call, I turned my back and left it all. I could not stay another day, to laugh, to love, to work or play. Tasks left undone must stay that way for I have found that place at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void, then fill it with remembered joy, a friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss. Ah yes, these things, I too, shall miss. Be not burdened with times of sorrow; I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.

My life's been full, I savored much, good friends, good times, a loved one's touch. Perhaps my time seemed all too brief, don't lengthen it now with undue grief.

Lift up your heart and share with me. God wanted me now, He set me free.

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

TO COMMEMORATE THE

5th Death
ANNIVERSARY

of

Norma Tuason Chua

(March 15, 1946 - December 20, 2002)

MASSSES WILL BE OFFERED FOR THE ETERNAL REPOSE OF HER SOUL
ON THURSDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2007 AT THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES:

Santuario de San Antonio - Forbes Park, Makati City	6:15 a.m.
National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes - Retiro Street, Quezon City	6:30 a.m.
San Agustin Church - Intramuros, Manila	6:30 a.m.
Santuario de San Pedro Bautista - San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City	6:30 a.m.
Malate Catholic Church - Malate, Manila	7:00 a.m.
Manila Metropolitan Cathedral - Intramuros, Manila	7:30 a.m.
Santo Domingo Church - Quezon Avenue, Quezon City	12:15 p.m.
Christ the King Church - E. Rodriguez Boulevard, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel - New Manila, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Saint Paul the Apostle Parish - Timog, Quezon City	6:00 p.m.
Monasterio de Santa Clara - Balanga, Bataan	6:00 p.m.
Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish - Bel-Air II, Makati City	6:30 p.m.
Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat - Mendiola, Manila	8:30 p.m.

Her loving husband, Eddie; and daughter, Eileen; request the relatives, friends, and people whose lives she has touched to offer a prayer for her soul. Her family also conveys sincere appreciation and gratitude to all who sympathized, remember, offer mass and prayers, and keep Norma alive in their memories and hearts.

"Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord.
And let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen."

Bernardina Jaucian Anson de los Reyes

passed away on December 17, 2007
at the age of 91

Family and friends are welcome to attend her wake at the PEA Chapel, Our Lady of Assumption Parish in Guinobatan, Albay until December 21.

Interment will be on
December 22 at 4:30 p.m.
at the Guinobatan Cemetery.

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I have
kept the
faith
(2 Timothy 4:7)

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(PDI-Dec. 5, 12 & 19, 2007)

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NEECO II Area 2

INVITATION TO SUBMIT BID PROPOSAL

To All Prospective Bidders:

Nueva Ecija II Electric Cooperative, Inc. - Area 2 (NEECO II-Area 2), in compliance with the guidelines of the Energy Regulatory Commission, invites interested parties to participate in the bidding or competitive selection process for the supply of energy requirements to its franchise area commencing on the year 2008 to 2018.

Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) by hand to the NEECO II Area 2 Pre-qualifications, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC). The LOI, signed by an authorized representative, shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the interested party and name of the principal contact. It must be delivered by hand to and received by the PBAC at the NEECO II Area 2 Main Office with address at 2nd Floor Smile Arcade Building, Brgy. Atate, Palayan City not later than 12:00 noon, on January 9, 2008.

The details of the bidding or competitive selection process are contained in the Request for Proposal (RFP), which interested parties must secure from PBAC Secretary, Alicia Alcantara, during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) from December 19, 2007 to January 9, 2008, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

Only interested parties that submit the LOI on time and who have been issued and have paid for the RFP will be qualified to participate.

(Sgd.) **RAMON M. DE VERA**
General Manager

(Sgd.) **JUANITA G. IGNACIO**
Chairman, PBAC

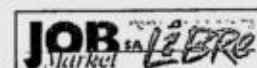
(PDI-December 19 & 26, 2007)

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(PDI-December 14 & 19, 2007)



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BSP sees trade deficit widening to \$9.6B in 2008

By Doris C. Dumlaog

Cites possible weakening of US economy, high oil prices

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas sees the country's trade deficit widening to \$9.6 billion next year from this year's projected shortfall of \$6.9 billion given uncertainties in the global environment.

Based on the latest official forecasts from the BSP, exports next year would reach \$52.3 billion as against an import bill of \$61.9 billion.

The bigger trade deficit expected for next year took into account various external risks such as a possible slowdown in

demand from Western economies, particularly the United States, as well as high cost of crude oil importation.

Another dampening factor for exporters is the sharp appreciation of the peso against the dollar, which not only reduces the peso equivalent of their earnings but also erodes the price competitiveness of locally made merchandise.

The peso, which has risen by more than 16 percent since January, is Asia's best performing

currency this year.

Despite bigger net trade outflows for next year, however, remittances from overseas Filipinos were expected to remain strong, thus supporting a current account surplus of \$6.9 billion against the \$6.7 billion estimated for this year.

The projected trade flows for 2008 were based on the government's target of a growth in exports of 8 percent as well as a rise in imports of 9 percent over this year.

For 2007, the BSP earlier projected a growth in exports of about 8 percent and a year-on-year expansion in imports of 7 percent. In dollar terms, full-year exports were projected at \$49.9 billion while the import bill was seen hitting \$56.8 billion.

In the Asian Development Bank's December issue of Asia Economic Monitor, a semiannual review of East Asia's emerging markets, the bank noted that the contribution of net ex-

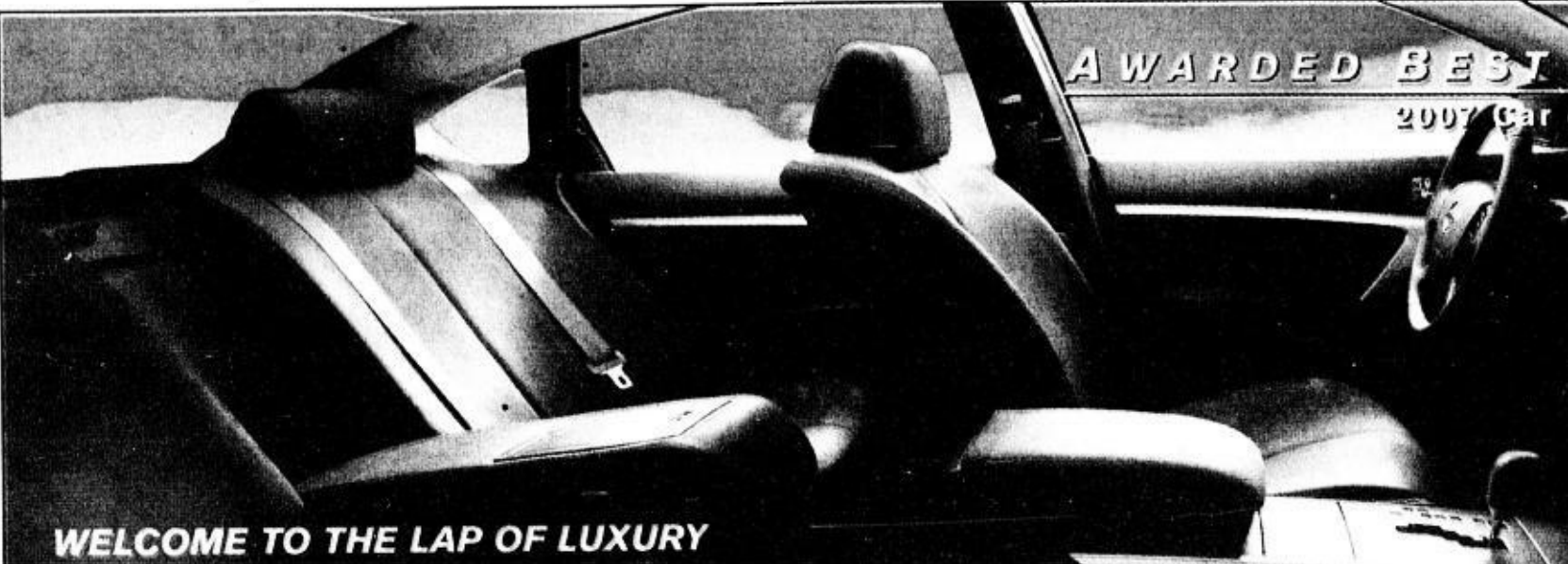
ports to gross domestic product among Southeast Asia's four biggest economies (the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia) fell to 0.6 percentage point in the third quarter from 3.4 percentage points in the second quarter.

The main factors for the decline included the weakening external environment and strengthening currencies, but strengthening domestic demand has also started to help narrow trade surpluses.

"In the Philippines, for example, the appreciation of the peso in real terms—mainly due to strong capital inflows combined with a surge in overseas worker remittances—has hurt the export competitiveness of the manufacturing sector and seen exports slowing," the ADB said.

But the bank noted that remittances has bolstered private consumption and the services sector has become the main driver of strong growth this year in the country, contributing 3.6 percentage points to the 6.6-percent expansion in the third quarter.

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BUSINESS

Grid concessionaire told to retain composition

PSALM bars winning Transco bidder from changing setup of consortium

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND Liabilities Management Corp. has disallowed any change in the composition of the winning bidder for the 25-year National Transmission Corp. concession.

PSALM said the group of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp., Calaca High Power Corp. and State Grid Corp. of China would have to be the exact same group that would operate

the nationwide transmission grid once they have secured a congressional franchise to do so.

This was imposed on the winning bidder to ensure their compliance with the citizenship requirement stipulated in the Constitution, PSALM said.

Under the Constitution, grantees of a public franchise should meet the 60-percent Filipino ownership restriction.

The Transco bidding rules require the winning bidder to first incorporate the concession company that will

apply for the congressional franchise to run the transmission system. The group that won the concession bidding should be the same one to operate, maintain and expand Transco.

According to PSALM, this means that the Monte Oro consortium could no longer take on any more partners, other the ones already in the group.

The consortium is also barred from changing the equity structure of the concession corporation for three years unless, as in other franchises, Congress

requires the concession corporation to conduct an initial public offering to open a portion of the ownership of the concession corporation to the public.

The Monte Oro-led consortium edged out its sole competitor—the group of San Miguel Energy Corp., TPG Aurora BV of the Netherlands and TNB Prai Sdn Bhd of Malaysia—with a bid of \$3.95 billion, as against \$3.905 billion.

Until a franchise is secured, Transco would remain under government control.

Gov't considers additional cuts in foreign loans

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT MAY FURTHER CUT its foreign borrowing program for 2008 in favor of domestic loans in order to reduce the impact of an appreciating peso on exporters and families of overseas Filipino workers.

According to Finance Secretary Margari-to Teves, the government's recently revised borrowing program of a 70:30 mix, in favor of domestic credit, may still be changed.

Originally, the borrowing program for 2008 was set at a mix of 64:36, which represented the share of domestic and foreign loans to total borrowings for the year.

"As of the moment, this (70:30) is the borrowing program," Teves said in a press briefing yesterday. "But the government could stretch it further to 75:25 in favor of more domestic borrowings depending on opportunities."

Teves said the 30-percent share of foreign borrowings to total government borrowings for next year translated to an absolute amount of \$2 billion, or P90 billion (officials used an exchange rate of P45:\$1).

Reducing the share to 25 percent therefore will cut the absolute amount of foreign borrowings to \$1.67 billion or P75 billion.

Government fiscal managers were forced to change the borrowing program for next year to cut the share of foreign loans to total loans as the peso strengthened to higher-than-expected levels.

Foreign borrowings are normally denominated in US dollars, therefore further building up the country's already growing dollar holdings. The Philippines' increasing gross international reserves, now at about \$32 billion, has pushed the peso to a seven-and-a-half year high.

The peso recently broke into the 41-to-a-dollar territory, and averaged at 46.6 to a dollar from January to November—stronger than the 47 to 49 assumed by economic managers when they drafted this year's budget program.

Filipino artists get to make a dent on GDP

By Riza T. Olchondra

COPYRIGHT-BASED INDUSTRIES, SUCH as the arts, have been contributing 4.82 percent to the country's gross domestic product, the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IP Philippines) said.

IP Philippines, citing a survey of the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA), said in a statement that copyright-based industries account for three to six percent of overall economies.

In the Philippines, copyright-based industries employ an estimated 317,000 workers, representing 11.1 percent of total employment in large establishments.

"Given the sector's contribution to the economy, we must protect the sector from intellectual property rights violations, lack of recognition and reward systems, delays in the issuance of certificates of registration, and the lack of provisions for the protection of copyright owners," IP Philippines director general Atty. Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said.

As part of efforts to promote awareness and protection of intellectual property, IP Philippines has forged partnerships with industry groups. For the arts, it launched TutoK Kasaysayang at its Alab Art Space and Innovation Area.

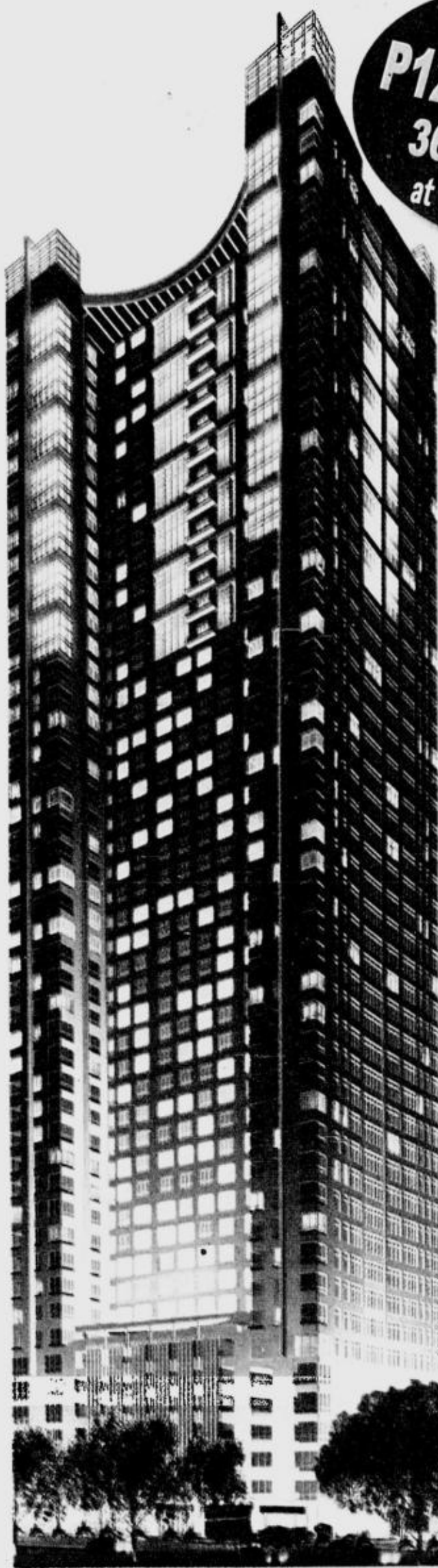
TutoK is a visual artists' collective that uses the visual medium as a channel for various advocacies. Kasaysayang, the theme of the exhibition, is a two-part group exhibition focusing on Philippine history where there will be a forum on art, history and intellectual property rights at the close of the exhibition on Jan. 18, 2008.

"The spaces, particularly Alab, are expressions of our commitment in support of the copyright and other creative industries," Cristobal said.

Copyright protects original expressions of literary, scholarly, scientific and artistic creations. Copyright extends to software programs, compilation of databases and derivative works.

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10 things to consider if you're giving a car this Christmas

By Tessa R. Salazar

WOW! HOW WE ENVY the recipient of your million-peso gift! If you are parting with some hard-earned moolah, then we're sure this gift is truly straight from the heart and not just from the hip pocket.

Though the intention is heartfelt, the buying decision must be dictated by the mind. So before opening your purses or writing anything down on your checkbook, read on.

1 Treat the glossy advertisements as tempting mermaids.

They may lull you into a fantasy world where everything is perfect for you. Consumer Reports magazine, for instance, has cited one key mistake of impulse buyers: Falling unreasonably in love with a single vehicle model, which would most likely blind you from other options that may be better for your needs.

When this happens, you tend to throw caution to the winds—skip the test-drive, focus only on the monthly payment when negotiating, buying the “deal” instead of the vehicle, and forgetting about doing more research on your prospective vehicle.

2 Drive, drive, drive it first. It's a must. Test-drive the prospective vehicle. Word of mouth is good, but you can't ride on good feedback. Take at least 30 minutes to conduct a complete test-drive and perform a thorough walk-around of any vehicle you're considering, as Consumer Reports has advised.

Car experts always stress: go to the highway and listen for unusual noises and feel the suspension. Test the shifters, they should play smoothly in case it's an automatic transmission, or they should not lurch suddenly if you're on a manual transmission. Check the blind spot and the turning radius when turning, parking or backing. Find a safe area to test the brakes, depending on how far the pedal travels. The feel of the brakes should inspire confidence that the vehicle will stop in a relatively short distance. Getting the car suited for your recipient's needs, his/her driving habits and his environment may actually delay his or her next trip to the auto mechanic.

Mandy Eduque, Automobile Association Philippines director, said whether the car is “new or used, the biggest mistake of a customer in buying a car is not test-driving it.” Ferman Lao, SpeedLab shop owner and Top Gear Philippines' technical editor,

stressed that one should never buy a car without test-driving it.

3 Start researching before buying. This includes looking at respectable local automotive online Websites that are consumer-oriented, asking a reliable car buff or a neighbor on the same car model that he or she has and then, (we can't stress this enough) actually taking your future car out for a spin—and not just a spin around the block but an actual extended test-drive.

Eduque said: “The buyer must research on what has been the experience on a car, especially reliability and service records.” Eduque recommends buyers to read Consumer Reports and other reputable car magazines.

And as reported by the INQUIRER Motoring during last year's “10 ways to prevent auto repair nightmares”: When in doubt with local or foreign car reviews, do your own research and consult a trusted and knowledgeable car mechanic. Look beyond the styling of a car and pay attention to details (especially at the heart and soul of the car, its engine bay).

4 Check the cost of maintenance. Ask for the warranty services, prepare a list of the common parts being replaced for the

first three years, and ask for the prices of these parts. Compare these side by side with competitor cars. With your trusted and knowledgeable mechanic, have them compared with the differences in the quality of the parts as well as the prices.

UP Prof. Edwin N. Quiros, a mechanical engineer, added that availability of parts, safety and resale value should also be considered.

“It might be worth to stretch the budget a certain amount if you are going to get a much better car, thus better value for money,” Lao said.

5 “If the vehicle you're eyeing is used, have a mechanic go over the car and check the car's registration papers with the LTO before paying,” Eduque advised.

6 Are you closed to other options? Don't be, Lao urges. It's a common mistake and one of the more frequent regrets of car buyers. Always keep your options open until the actual sale.




7 Pay attention to warranties when buying a car. In an interview with the DTI consumer assistance and protection center last year, it was learned that a lot of people who bought brand-new cars didn't

pay much attention to the terms of warranty and the conflicts arising from this situation. Some car owners demanded replacements right away, but since they had signed the terms of the warranty, their arguments went all for naught. As DTI pronounced, “If you don't agree to the terms of warranty, don't buy it. You bought it, signed it, that means you agree to it.”

8 “Many Filipinos don't read what they sign,” according to the DTI consumer assistance and protection center. “This careless habit of signing everything away leads to so many unresolved complaints.”

9 Knowledge is power, so know as much as there is to know about the product before buying it, not after buying it.


10 And as the DTI consumer assistance advised: Get your own copy of your consumer rights and responsibilities. DTI consumer assistance said the first entity that would actually protect your rights is yourself. The DTI consumer hotline is 811-8231, or e-mail complaints to dti-ncr4@info.com.ph. Get an online copy of the Consumer Act of the Philippines or Republic Act 7394.


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Stylish Strada define police visibility in San Juan

POLICE VISIBILITY TO THE MAX. The mayor observes that people actually take pictures of the stylish Strada.

By Tessa R. Salazar

IT'S CRIMINAL TO RIDE IN THE backseat of this vehicle. And in Mayor JV Ejercito's turf in San Juan, that's meant quite literally.

Though the image of San Juan's police force is "spruced up" for the holidays, more important is adding a bit more confidence and that "sindak" factor to the city's 250 or so law enforcers on patrol.

JV, a recent TOYM (Ten Outstanding Young Men) awardee, recently added six spanking new Mitsubishi Strada pickups to his fleet of police vehicles.

The brand-new Stradas form part of San Juan's refueling program, along with six Toyota Hi-Lux pickups and Innova vehicles acquired last year.

More reliable, durable

"Pickups are more reliable, more durable and I think it will last longer than ordinary sedans or cars, which may not last five years considering how the policemen use the cars because of the demands of the job,"



ITCHING to buy one for himself, JV says he's contented to have one for the force's use. "I see them every day, so it's like me owning one already."

JV told INQUIRER Motoring during the recent turnover rites of the new Stradas at the San Juan City Hall.

He said, in jest, that the decision to buy the Mitsubishi pickup was also due in part to the name "Strada." He quickly added that the Strada has been a proven vehicle in terms of performance, and the pickup's aggressive look fit the force perfectly.

Performance

"When I test-drove one vehicle, I was surprised that it was powerful and quiet, considering it was diesel-powered. I think the performance made me decide to get these (as) patrol cars. At the same time, they do look very nice. I think the image is very important for the police, because when responding to a crime scene, you wouldn't



NO more old beat-up police squad cars for the hardworking law enforcers of San Juan

feel confident with old patrol cars," JV said.

He added that the San Juan police have been receiving "a lot of good comments because of our very nice patrol cars. They said the image of our police force is now a notch higher than the others because of our ruggedly handsome cars."

It remains to be seen, though, if San Juan's criminals would now be more willing to be caught because of the Stradas.

Give your car a wet look shine

YOUR 13TH-MONTH PAY OR Christmas bonus would go a long way if you invest it on your car. And what better way to improve your daily ride's appearance than by giving it that "wet look" shine!

Yes, you can give your vehicle the luster it deserves by bringing it to The Wet Look, the premier auto refinishing shop in the metro. And the best part is: The Wet Look is having a special Christmas washover promo this holiday season.

Wet Look washover

Danny Tuason, president of The Wet Look, said subcompact car owners can give their precious rides the famous Wet Look washover for a mere P25,500. For this rate, car

owners can have truly shiny car not only for the whole of 2008 but for several more years after that. This is because The Wet Look uses high-quality 2K paints that last even under extreme conditions.

The Wet Look is the only shop that gives a standard 24-month warranty on their washovers, which is proof of the quality of its work.

Tuason said the special promo runs for a very limited time only, specifically from Dec. 19, 2007 to Jan. 16, 2008. For more information on other rates, visit The Wet Look at 1267 Batangas St., San Isidro, Makati City or call 815-4205 or 888-4342. You may also e-mail your inquiries at info@thewetlook.com.ph or visit The Wet Look's website at www.thewetlook.com.ph.

Yearend special deals from Subaru

MOTOR IMAGE PILIPINAS, THE EXCLUSIVE distributor of Subaru, will cap off its successful year in the market by offering special deals for the whole lineup including the recently introduced 2008 Impreza 2.0R Sport. The year 2007 has been remarkable for Subaru after numerous recognitions including the recent 2007 Car of the Year awards for the Impreza, Forester and Outback winning in their respective categories.

Last November, Motor Image launched the all-new Impreza marking the entry of Subaru in the mainstream sedan/hatchback market. All Subaru models will be offered in special financing packages only for this month.

This year has gone quite well for the once-known niche market brand with a number of events and recognitions that have announced the arrival of Subaru in the market. Russ Swift started the year for Subaru by showing the prowess of its vehicles in the recent Manila International Auto Show.

Exhilarating introduction

For first-time Subaru customers, the event gave them an exhilarating introduction to the world of Subaru's symmetrical all-wheel-drive (AWD) technology with world-



IMPREZA

renowned precision driver Russ Swift driving the Impreza through his trademark moves—reverse spin, hand-brake park, and parallel park; the "dance" routine and two-wheel driving leading to the climax with his trademark "doughnuts."

Subaru also received a number of recognitions from various award winning bodies including the 2006 and 2007 Car of the Year best SUVs awards for the Forester 2.5 XT and the Outback 3.0R from the Car of the Year (Coty) group.

The Impreza WRX also won the nod of the group as the best sportscar for 2007 and the same recognition this time from the People's Choice Awards. The respected auto magazine C! also cited the Legacy 2.0R, the Forester 2.5

XT and Impreza WRX STI as winners of Editors' Picks for the executive class, compact SUV and sports sedan categories, respectively.

Special financing deals

Motor Image will bring to a close this fantastic year by offering special financing deals for all models including the all-new Subaru Impreza 2.0R-Sport.

Backed up by the country's top financial institutions BPI, Banco de Oro, Philam Savings Bank and PSBank, special all-in-one down payment plans which already include a 3-year LTO registration and accessories such as tint, floor matting and seatcovers, are made available for all customers only for this month. Low monthly and low down payment plans are also available for all models.

Customers can also get the chance to feel or test their desired vehicles through the test-drive units available for all models. They can choose to test-drive Subaru's complete model lineup—the Outback 3.0R, Forester 2.5 XT and 2.0R, Legacy 2.0R and the all-new Impreza 2.0R-Sport and WRX 2.5 Turbo.

Interested customers can visit the Subaru Greenhill showroom and can also check the company's website www.motorimage.net.

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Read before Christmas shopping

IN THE MARKET FOR SOME NEW metal this holiday season? Finally got the 15th month pay announced at the company Christmas party? Bet the house and lot on black and won? Robbed a Third World nation? Whatever circumstances have brought you to this point, putting the funds together for a new purchase is actually the easy part.

Choosing wisely, well, that's another matter altogether. Here are a few points to ponder for those in the new car market this holiday season—and boy, I'm sure there a lot of you, itching to get your new rides.

Just because the old Brand Z Model X car you bought six years ago was a hoot to drive doesn't automatically mean the newest one in the showroom is any better. There is even a distinct possibility the 2008 Brand Z Model X you are lusting for is much less car for much more money. Let's think about that for a bit.

Alterations

Cars are constantly changed, model to model, by those who build them. Very often these alterations pander to market research, in an effort to sell to a larger segment of drivers. Sad that for more and more cars these days, that it seems that focused group discussion dictates more of what a car will become than cutting edge engineering and road testing sessions. Maybe it is easier to sift through libraries of survey forms than to drive a decent lap of the Nurburgring Nord-schleife, who knows?

Rising costs of the design process and actual manufacturing are also affecting the car as we know it. Sheet metal is getting thinner. Plastics are getting cheaper. You get the picture. We must remember that each car sold in the market must reflect positively on a company's bottom line. The automobile industry is a business after all and not a charitable institution. The owners and directors of car companies need to eat too.

So look before you leap. For the consumer, blind brand loyalty is most often a losing proposition. There are those of us who just keep buying from a single manufacturer, year after year, decade after

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma



decade. Believing that cars never change over time, that they display the same attributes from one generation of automobile to the other is really quite foolish.

Research

Once you've gotten over any biases and discrimination, you can move on. The next step is equally critical. With all the choices out in the market, the question must be asked of where one is to begin. It's simple really. Research is the key.

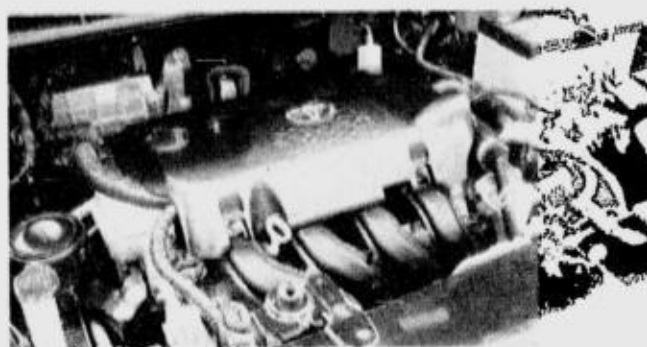
Easily 90 percent of what's being sold to the public doesn't deliver any sort of real value. Whether it drives like grocery cart, is as practical to use as a pogo stick or looks like its been built by Worker's Toy Collective 168 in the mainland—please test-drive cars to figure out what to stay away from. This is the only way to ascertain which tenth of the market works, and works well for you.

Liking what you drive

Personally liking what you drive is important, as automobile ownership is a losing proposition from the moment you drive out the showroom. Within a month of bringing home a brand spanking new car, all one is left with is shrinking residual value and a vehicle that will begin breaking down within a year of operation.

Remember that cars are merely mechanical things and even the simplest machines eventually break. If you've ever stripped a screw in your life, you know what I mean.

The odd-winning proposition still lurks around the Philippine automotive market. These are cars that offer great, sometimes unbelievable value to the consumer. Please note that these cars are the exception and not the rule. Go out, find them and buy them.



THE VIOS' engine, whether 1.5, or 1.3 liter, is enhanced with VVT-i technology

PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA



INSIDE THE 1.5G MT Vios, Optitron meters and a centrally mounted instrument panel

The best-selling passenger car of 2007

NEXT TO THE INNOVA, THE VIOS is Toyota Motor Philippines' (TMP) best-selling vehicle with sales averaging 800 units a month this year, up from 700 monthly in the first eight months of 2005. Introduced in Southeast Asian countries in 2003, the Vios, also known as the Belta in Japan, went global after its successful Asian debut and was launched in the United States as the Yaris sedan in 2006.

In 2005, the Vios won the Best Subcompact Car of the Year Award in the Car Awards Group Inc.'s (Cagi) Car of the Year Philippines program. Last year, the 2006 Vios gained the distinction of being the best-selling passenger car in the country.

Improving a highly successful product is a tall order, but somehow Toyota's engineers may have swung it. The 2007 Vios, unveiled at the 1st Philippine International Motor Show last March and launched on the market last July, looks headed for a 1,000 units-a-month sales target despite its higher price. TMP offers the new Vios with either a 1.5-liter or a 1.3-liter engine, automatic (AT) or manual transmission (MT). Like the Innova, the Vios is assembled at TMP's Santa Rosa, Laguna plant.

Winning combination

Perhaps the reason behind the Vios' success is its winning combination of pizzazz, economy and reliability. Ab initio, the Vios captured the imagination of car buffs as a fun-to-drive, well-engineered, durable small sedan—thanks to its sporty attitude and Toyota's reputation as a manufacturer of good-quality, dependable mass market cars.

The nimble handling and flat, stable cornering characteristics of the Vios as experienced by test drivers and delighted buyers confirmed the fun-to-drive image. In the 2007 edition, Toyota has wisely retained the front MacPherson struts, rear torsion beam suspension and stabilizer that are key to the Vios' agility and road grip.

Ditto the spunky 1.5-liter, 16-valve DOHC VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent) engine in the G grade that is mated to either a gate-type 4-speed AT with Super ECT or a

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza



smooth-shifting 5-speed MT (it was the latter that I test-drove.) Max output is rated at 107 hp/6,000 rpm and 142 Nm/4,200 rpm max torque. Disc brakes on all four 15-inch alloy wheels supply adequate stopping power.

Changes

Although the horsepower and final peak torque figures remain the same on paper, Toyota has reportedly made changes to the intake exhaust and ECU programming of the Vios G to improve the low to mid-level torque. The longer wheelbase and lower ground clearance further enhance on-road stability.

With its balanced power to weight ratio, the 1.5 Vios can 0 from zero to 100 kilometer per hour (kph) in a respectable (for a 107-hp car) 11.81 seconds. More important, the '07 Vios is fuel-frugal, averaging 18 km per liter in a 411-km economy run recently in Thailand. Despite its compact size, the Vios remains relatively comfortable and quiet during long trips due to numerous insulators in many portions of the car and the fact that its engine is slightly quieter than a high-rev engine like the competitor's VTEC. Curved surface panels and reinforcements for the front floor reduce body vibration.

More room

The longer wheelbase translates into increased interior length and interior height for

more passenger room. The rear floor is flat, adding to the back seat occupants' comfort quotient. While the new Vios is 25 mm taller than the previous edition, it is longer and more aerodynamically efficient.

The front grille, front bumper and multireflector headlamps of the Vios remind one of the Camry. In the G variant (P765,000 for the AT, P730,000 for MT), the turn signal lamps integrated in the side-view mirrors, a printed antenna and rear reflectors are the new external features.

The overall cabin design resembles the Yaris with a centrally located V-shaped metallic console and Optitron gauges atop the middle of the dash. A Multi-Information Display, an in-dash CD and MP3 stereo, a three-spoke leather steering wheel with audio controls, three cupholders and storage spaces galore complete the interior picture.

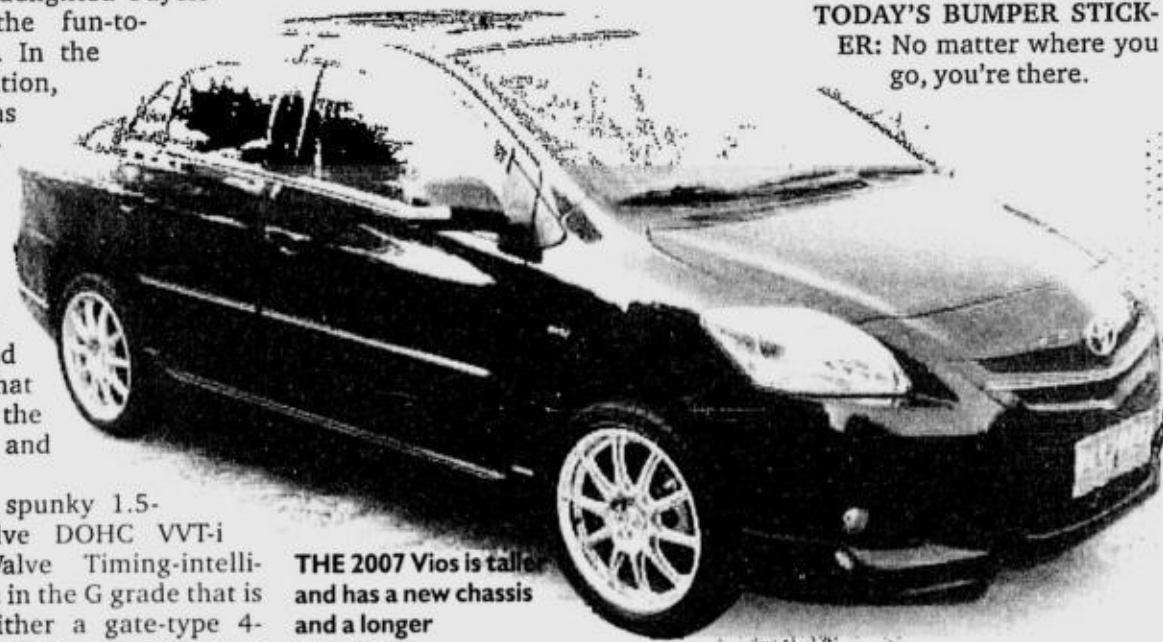
Volume

The trunk volume has been increased by 75 liters to 475 liters. Luggage space can be expanded by folding flat the 60/40 split rear bench. Since the trunk opening is relatively low, loading items is easier.

Dual front SRS airbags are standard equipment for the Vios G together with ABS, EBD, Brake Assist and keyless entry with alarm system. As in all Toyota vehicles, the Vios has a GOA (Global Outstanding Assessment) safety body, a reinforced cabin with side-impact beams plus front and rear 3-point ELR seatbelts with pretensioner and force limiter for the driver and front seat passenger.

Given all the above and the soaring price of gasoline, do you still wonder why the Vios is the best-selling car in the Philippines?

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: No matter where you go, you're there.



THE 2007 Vios is taller and has a new chassis and a longer wheelbase.

Inquirer reporter wins in Ford Awards

By Charles E. Buban

FOR FEATURING MICHELLE YU, THE country's first lady drifter, INQUIRER Motoring reporter Tessa R. Salazar won the recently concluded 2007 Henry Ford Awards in the Motor Sports Feature category.

The Motor Sports Feature category, a new addition for this year's edition, is conferred to a reporter whose best story on any of four-wheel motor sports event (rally racing, track racing, off-roading, Formula 1, Formula 3 and other similarly related topics) was published.

Aside from a trophy, Salazar also received P40,000 cash.

Joining Salazar in this year's edition of the Henry Ford Awards were Business Mirror's Edward Simon (Best Published Photograph for Newspaper); Top Gear magazine's Jose Antonio Acosta (Best Published Photograph for Magazine); The Philippine Star's Manny de los Reyes (Best Auto Test Drive/Auto Event Story); www.motion-

cars.com's Ulysses Ang (Best Automotive Online Feature); Top Gear magazine's Jason Ang (Best Motoring Column Issue); People's Journal's Junep Ocampo (Best Environment and Conservation Feature); Auto Review TV program (Best Safety Feature); Hotwire TV program (Best Automotive TV Feature); The Manila Times' Vernon Sarne (Best Automotive Industry Feature); Manila Bulletin's Myrna Velasco (Best Ford Feature); C! Magazine's Vince Pornelos (Best Mazda Feature); and Business Mirror (Best Motoring Section).

Now on its 7th year, the Henry Ford Award is given to individuals and organizations who have exemplified excellence in automotive reporting.

Salazar has been a past winner of this award, winning three (Best Auto Innovation Story, Best Auto Industry Story, and Best Auto Event Story) in 2003.

In 2001, she won the Best Auto Innovation/Auto Event Story for her "Get rid of the blind spot for safe driving" story.

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See flyers for details. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5940 Series of 2007

THE NEW Alterra promises more comfortable ride for its occupants.



Isuzu's Alterra Upgrades for the holiday season

By Charles E. Buban

FOR A LOT OF FILIPINO motorists, nothing beats a comfortable cabin whose amenities are much appreciated during long drives or while caught in a traffic jam.

"This is why for 2008, we decided to make the Alterra even more comfortable for the driver as well as the passengers," said Keith Takeda, Isuzu Philippines president.

Chief among these upgrades is the new JVC (AVX33) entertainment system that features a 3.5-inch monitor, Dolby digital decoder, a 180-watt subwoofer at the back, iPod connectivity, and 5.1-channel digital surround speaker system.

The new entertainment system has

a dual-zone feature that will allow front seat occupants to enjoy their preferred music while those at the back may listen to different music or even watch DVD.

Hands-free cellphone use

It also has a Bluetooth function that will allow the vehicle's occupants to use their cellphones hands-free.

"This means more safety for the driver if he or she really needs to take the call while driving," Takeda said.

Indeed, safety is enhanced with the 2008 Alterra as IPC incorporated a reverse-assist camera mounted at the vehicle's rear spoiler.

The images captured by the camera are fed into the dash monitor so the driver will have additional assistance when backing up in tight parking slots or be warned if there is someone or something at the rear.

"The side mirrors are now classier with its European-themed design. More significantly, these mirrors are now power-folding for added convenience when navigating narrow spaces. The driver's side view is also equipped with a wide-angle mirror for better visibility," Takeda explained.

Keyless entry

He added that the 2008 Alterra also comes with a transmitter-integrated key that allows keyless entry—a feature normally found on high-end luxury vehicles.

The 2008 Alterra is still powered by a 3.0-liter common-rail direct-injection turbodiesel engine (144 horsepower and 294 Newton meters of torque) mated to either a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual transmission.

Takeda said this engine is more fuel-efficient and more environment-friendly.

"We wish to reward our loyal customers with a much improved 2008 Alterra. We believe that with this package, IPC will be able to have more satisfied motorists on the road whatever challenges they may encounter along their way," Takeda said.

The 2008 Alterra is available in 4x2 manual (P1.490 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.5 million for the pearl color variant); the 4x2 automatic (P1.545 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.555 million for the pearl color variant); and the 4x4 automatic (P1.673 million for the monotone/two-tone variant and P1.683 million for the pearl color variant).

TRANSPORT TRIVIA

By Emman Cena

Envirofit's retrofitting

NOT ONLY DOES PLANTING TREES could make the green makeover.

In a move to save fuel and fight pollution, a technology known as retrofitting has been done in the cities of Vigan and Puerto Princesa by the Envirofit, a non-profit organization.

Dubbed as Envirofit retrofit, the kit enables a cleaner, direct-injection alternative that can improve air quality by reducing hydrocarbon emissions by 90 percent, carbon monoxide emissions by 70 percent, and particulate emissions (smoke) by 80 percent.

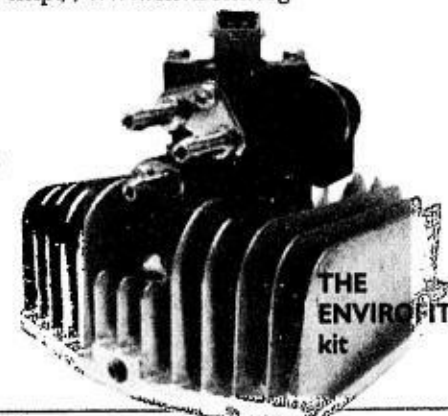
How does the kit work? According to hero.com, the carburetor is replaced with an injector. Originally developed for snowmobiles, the direct injection technology of the kits has been adapted so that the retrofit system eliminates the carburetor and fuel is instead introduced directly into the engine cylinder, thus conserving more unburned fuel.

According to Envirofit, the kits could cut fuel consumption from 35 to 50 percent and decrease the emissions of a two-stroke engine—translating to not only reduced pollution but also cost-savings for ordinary taxi-drivers.

Aside from the Philippines, the technology is also used in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and other parts of South Asia. The Asian Development Bank estimates there are some 100 million two-stroke vehicles in Southeast Asia.

In June, the retrofit kit project received recognition in clean transport and mobility from the World Clean Energy Awards in Basel, Switzerland.

References: <http://www.treehugger.com>, <http://www.blueegg.com>, <http://www.envirofit.org>



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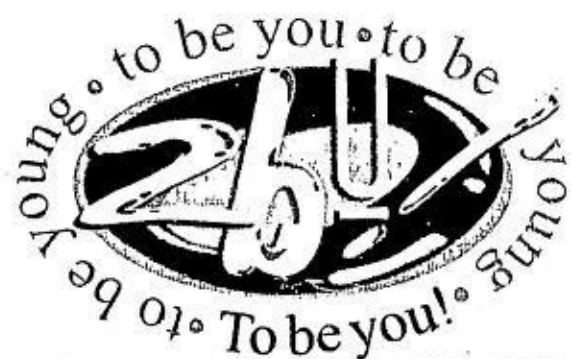
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2bU! Christmas Scrapbook

Let the spirit of the season take over! Enjoy this collection of the best Yuletide memories in photographs, essays, journal entries, poems, stories from the staff of 2bU!, our friends and our readers!



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Christmas is where the heart is

Text and photos
by Cheryl Tiu
2bU! Correspondent

I LOVE CHRISTMAS. IT IS my favorite celebration of the year. I love how the city lights up with pretty decor, how Christmas carols echo festively throughout shopping malls, and how various establishments have Christmas trees and Nativity sets on display to honor the birth of Christ.

Every year, my holidays are spent with my family in Manila. Our Christmas tree is up on the first day of December. We hang lights and wreaths around our living room, play Christmas songs on our radio and join in on the Christmas-shopping rush to buy presents for family and friends.

On Dec. 24, the Tiu clan gathers at my Auntie Linda's house for our annual Christmas Eve dinner. She prepares the most scrumptious fare every year, which we all devour in no time. Before midnight, we head home to open our presents under the tree.

On Christmas Day, my family wakes up early to go to Mass. We spend lunch with my mother's side, the Alandy Dy's, at a Chinese restaurant. In the evening, the seven of

It does not
matter where
you are. What's
important is
who you're with

us in my immediate family dine together at home or in a restaurant. This is our Christmas tradition each year and it is one that I truly enjoy.

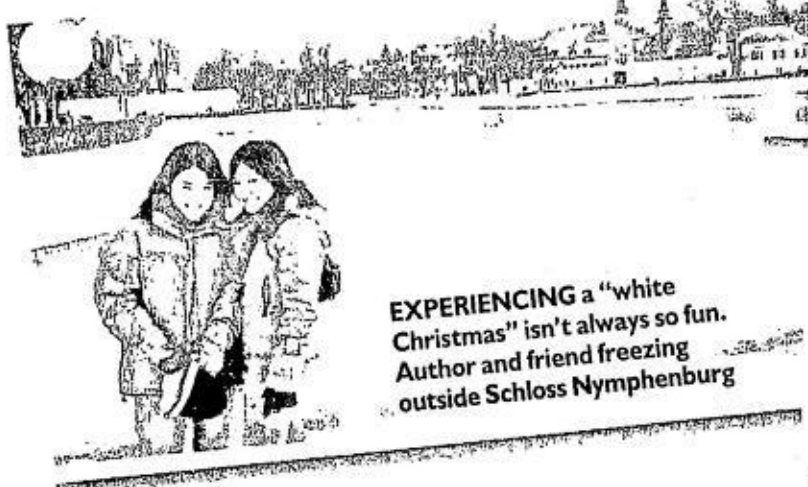
White Christmas

I have to admit though that I have always dreamed of a white Christmas. Ever since I was young, I had always wondered what it was like to spend Christmas overseas, particularly at a destination dressed in snow, where I could throw snowballs and make snow angels.

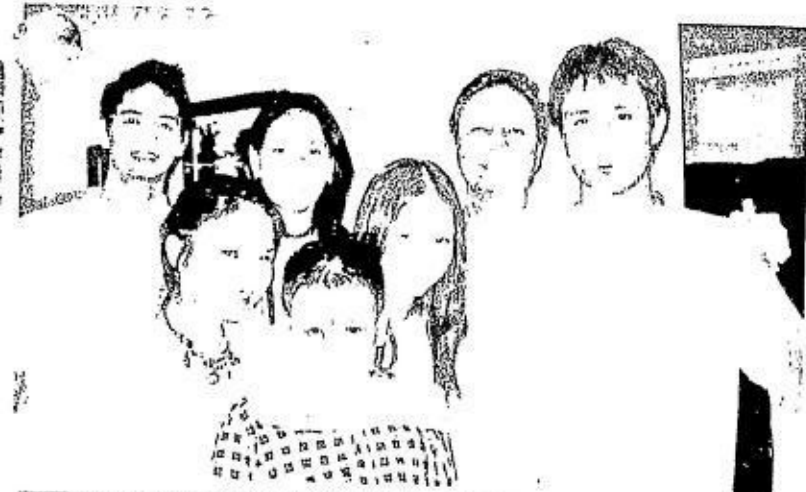
Last 2005, it happened. After my exchange program semester in Angers, France, I decided to spend the holidays in the continent with my friends, Aimee and Barbie, before going home to Manila.

I had planned a circular two-week itinerary where we'd hop through seven cities beginning from Paris going

CHRISTMAS IS WHERE/ C3



EXPERIENCING a "white Christmas" isn't always so fun. Author and friend freezing outside Schloss Nymphenburg



THE AUTHOR with her family at home after opening their presents



WITH close friends Aimee and Barbie, making the most of exploring a pretty (yet empty) Strasbourg on Christmas day



THE TIU cousins at their annual Christmas Eve dinner in 2006

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Rediscovering Christmas

By Jamie Tecson

THEY SAY THAT YOU ARE NEVER TOO old to be a kid again, and that it is never too late to try to be one. When we become adults, many things about us change. From our physical appearances to the way we think, everything changes. Our dreams in life become more realistic, unlike when we were children. Then, the sky was the limit and the more surreal, the better.

When I was a child, the Christmas holiday was my favorite holiday of the year. I would write letters to Santa asking for my favorite toys as gifts. I would even design my letter with drawings, just so I'd be sure that Santa would give me a nice toy.

When Christmas morning came, I would be the first to run down to where the Christmas stockings were. I saw every gift like it was a gift from the heavens. I would run my fingers through the smooth surface of the Christmas wrapper and then rip it open, savoring every crispy sound it made. That would be my sign of appreciation and excitement. Every gift, whether big or small, I would name as my new favorite.

When I was 10, I stopped writing letters to Santa. I guess you could say I outgrew the habit. And last year, I felt that Christmas did not have that same

thrill anymore. I felt empty inside, like there was a hole somewhere inside of me.

I was celebrating with family. I received gifts from relatives and friends. But why could not I shake off the feeling that something was missing?

I decided to open some gifts after the celebration. To be honest, I have judged some gifts by the way they were wrapped and how large or small they were. I'd carefully peel off the wrapper, take a peek at the gift inside, and decide right then and there whether I'd keep the gift or not.

Doing this again, I realized at that moment that I had nobody but myself to blame

Why could not I shake off the feeling that something was missing?

for losing the spirit of Christmas.

As we grow older, we learn to expect too much from people. As we open each present we receive on Christmas day and find out that it is not the one we want, we judge the people who gave us those gifts. If we don't like their presents, we think they are being cheap or are lousy gift-givers.

We don't realize it, but we lose our Christmas spirit this way.

Lately, I've been wishing that I were a child again. I would like to revisit the thrill of waiting for the clock to strike midnight, the excitement of opening a present without thinking whether it would be nice or

ugly, the dream that I would get a glimpse of Santa Claus even though I never did.

I would like to make each moment matter to me and appreciate every little thing, whether good or bad, that happens.

I think I'll wake up early on Christmas day this year and rush down to my presents. I will probably sit on the floor and grab the first gift that I see. And no, I will not carefully peel them open, but rip the wrapper off to my heart's content.

Afterwards, I will be thankful for every present that comes my way.



ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO



Envelopmental gift-giving

Text and photo by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

MY LOVELY LOLA ALWAYS had this tradition of letting me wrap her gifts as early as November. One yuletide season several years ago, she got tired of it and realized how it was so much easier to just hand out cash-filled envelopes.

And so by the first few weeks of December (she no longer needed to rush), she'd ask me to buy those red Chinese envelopes to use for her Christmas gifts.

In 2003, when I first started to bring my girlfriend to our family Christmas Day lunch, my grandmother handed me one of her red Chinese envelopes, addressed to me and my girlfriend, Bunny.

It had a lovely dedication handwritten by my grandmother, who suffered from a stroke when she was younger, got her right side paralyzed and since then had to do things using the left side of her body, including writing.

We instantly extracted the bills, added them to our wallets, and included the red envelope in our scrapbook.

In 2004, Bunny and I once again received another red envelope from my grandmother, but this time, someone else had clearly written the dedication. The amount of money inside was also less than last year's. Nevertheless, the cash went straight to our wallets while the red envelope went directly to our scrapbook.

Dedication

In 2005, my grandma asked me to write her dedications on the red envelopes. I was, of course, glad to help al-

though it felt a little weird writing her dedication for Bunny and me.

It was even weirder when on Christmas Day itself, she handed me an envelope with a dedication I myself wrote. That year, due to hard times, the amount of the money inside was even less than the previous year's. And so Bunny and I taped the red envelope—complete with the money inside—in our scrapbook. I appreciated how my grandmother was giving us so much even if she didn't have a job and times were hard.

In the middle of 2006, I had my own hard times in the finance department. There were several times when I took out the bills from the red envelope and put it in my wallet for reserve.

One day, I had no choice but to spend the money. It broke my heart to finally use it, after stopping myself for so long. I was guilty about spending it, but I felt a little better knowing I used it on something I really needed and that I used it only when I was left with no other choice.

In Christmas 2006, my grandma totally scrapped the whole envelope idea and just handed us cash.

Christmas is just around the corner like a 7-Eleven. My grandmother hasn't asked me to buy her red envelopes or write her dedications yet, but I'm not really waiting for that.

I've been busy hunting for the best-looking red envelope for my grandmother this Christmas. This year, I'm the one giving her a red envelope. A really thick one packed with bills and lots of unconditional love from her grandson.

E-mail the author at ninomarksablan@yahoo.com

I have learned to associate red envelopes with my grandma

FOR NIÑO + BUNNY-
MERRY XMAS!
LOVE: NANAY

BUNNY-
XMAS!
LOVE: NIÑO

By Camille Asuncion

EVERYONE SAYS CHRISTMAS IS THE time of the year that gets everyone giddy and excited, that makes everything more cheerful and cozier than usual.

For others, Christmas magnifies how sad their life really is. If things seem dark on a normal day, it is bound to suck a hundred times more during the holiday.

But the Christmas season has not brought out the perky or the suicidal in me. It is the time that brings out my inner geek.

1. When I was only 7 years old, I was excited to buy gifts for everyone, although my allowance was only P20 pesos a day. I remember the first Christmas present I gave—it was for my mom.

I got her this metallic pink My-Gel sign pen from the boutique in school. I remember feeling so proud when I handed it to her after Noche Buena, untidily wrapped in Hallmark paper and taped.

Five years later, my grandfather gave me a compilation of all our home videos. I was caught on tape bragging to everyone how that sign pen cost me the large sum of P30.



CHECK out Triassic Tag, one of the park's latest attractions, for some thrills.

RYAN FERNANDEZ

Family fun and games

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

WHILE THERE ARE carnivals all over the city, there is still good reason—12, actually—to head all the way to Sta. Rosa, Laguna to visit Enchanted Kingdom, the country's largest theme park.

"Christmas is a time for memories," said Mario Mamon, president and chair of Enchanted Kingdom.

"We want to help people make new memories by providing them with reasons to come here to the park."

Enchanted Kingdom, now celebrating its 12th anniversary, is offering 12 attractions this holiday season. Reduced entrance fee, new rides, stores, performers, and competitions, among others, await the park's visitors this month.

Whether you are young or old, male or female, energetic or not, you will surely find something in store for you at the park.

Children will love SpongeBob SquarePants the Ride, now showing at the Rialto Theater, while teens should have a blast trying out Triassic Tag, a laser-gun war game that will have you ducking behind bushes and walls

to escape from your opponents.

For fence-sitters, too

For those who prefer to stay on the sidelines watching the action, check out Oliver's High Dive Show that features a group of European high divers performing a variety of life-threatening stunts.

Want something more whimsical? Watch magician Lou Hilario in action as he pulls some tricks out of his hat—or sleeve.

If you are looking for some good, clean fun, nothing can be more wholesome than The Bloomfields, who will be performing at the park on Dec. 29—their take on '60s music is refreshing and energetic, without being old-fashioned (finally, a band that teenagers can watch with their parents without cringing).

After that, popular OPM Bamboo will rock the stage on Dec. 30.

However, if you are really itching to watch holiday performances, catch the Christmas play by theater group Trumpets Dec. 23, 25, 27 and 28, as well as various performances from choral groups.

Visit www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph

All the lonely people

By Patricia Abigail C. Lim

MEREDITH GREY (OF THE television show "Grey's Anatomy") once said, "40 years ago, The Beatles asked the world a question. They wanted to know where all the lonely people in the world came from. My theory is that a great many of the lonely people come from hospitals. As doctors, we ignore our needs so we can meet our patients' needs. We ignore friends and families so we can save other people's friends and families."

She is probably right. Or, at least partially.

Christmas is always a big deal for Filipinos. It is the day we forget our diets and eat everything high in cholesterol. It is the day we reveal our hidden talents in singing and dancing to our biggest fans—our families.

It is the day we forget that we have not paid our electric bill and that we might need to use candles the next day. It is the day we put aside the urge to throw plates at one another.

After all it is Christ's birthday. It is the day we spend with our loved ones.

At least for some of us.

Lonely Christmas

A few years back I spent my first Christmas without my mom. She had to stay in the hospital as she was the resident doctor on duty that time.

It was my first Christmas without loud music or Christmas carols. It was the first Christmas that I slept early.

That Christmas, I listened to people greet families and friends over the radio.

I wished that, even just for that day, all the sick people would get well so my mom could go home.

I am used to her being out most of the time, but not on Christmas Day.

Though we could celebrate on the 24th or 26th and there are other holidays, why is it such a big deal when we are not together during Christmas? Why do we feel lonelier?

Maybe because we see, we feel, we know that a lot of people are celebrating and are having the time of their lives. So the longing gets stronger and the pain of not being together lingers.

Meredith concluded, "Which means that at the end of the day, all we really have is ourselves and nothing can make you feel lonelier than that."

It is indeed a sad thing when all you have is yourself; it is a disaster to be alone on Christmas Day. Thankfully, my family only experienced that once.

But many Filipino families—parents, husbands, wives, children of overseas Filipino workers, soldiers and doctors—are not as lucky.

Who are the lonely people in the world? They are the people who have to content themselves with gifts, phone calls or greeting cards on Christmas Day, wishing that these can ease the pain of being alone.

Christmas is From page C1

through Budapest and ending in Amsterdam.

For Christmas, it was the city of Strasbourg that beckoned us. I had read both online and in my Lonely Planet that it was a joyous city to spend Christmas in since it had a lot of Christmas markets and festivities. We were excited.

Disappointed

The three of us agreed we wanted our Christmas Eve dinner to be special. We wanted to spend it in a nice fancy restaurant where we could dress up a little bit and splurge on dishes we normally wouldn't on any other day.

The first French restaurant I called, which was highly recommended by my book, said it was closed for Christmas. Too bad, I was really looking forward to their foie gras, but it was okay, I still had five more to go.

I rang up the next French restaurant and it gave me the same answer. So did the third, the fourth, and the fifth!

By then, we were getting worried. We did not want to spend our Christmas Eve picking out of canned goods in our hostel rooms. The last recommended restaurant on my list was a Lebanese one, Au Cèdre. I went hysterical after that phone call—yes, they were open!

Not so white, after all

When we got to Strasbourg on Christmas Eve, we were greeted with darkness. Everything—including the Christmas market—was closed. Public transportation had ceased running so we had to walk to the restaurant which, luckily, was only 20 minutes away.

It was not snowing but it had just rained, therefore it was very cold, black... and sad. Asides from the three of us, there seemed to be nobody else on the streets of Strasbourg. Christmas lights that dangled from the closed shopping estab-



CHRISTMAS Eve in Strasbourg in 2005. Everything was closed save for the Christmas lights.

lishments and restaurants seemed to be our only glimmer of hope.

At least the restaurant managed to lift our spirits. Its colorful interiors and bright lights put smiles back on our faces. I had a hearty dinner of dried beef slices, spinach-stuffed pastries, grilled lamb cutlets, Lebanese flan with rose petals and pistachios, which I enjoyed with a carafe of Lebanese wine. It was a delightful meal and I was thankful to be in the company of two of my closest friends.

On Christmas day, we ambled along the streets of Strasbourg and used it as an opportunity to sight-see. The Christmas markets opened that afternoon and we shopped for souvenirs while munching gingerbread cookies and sipping vin chaud (hot wine). We went to Mass at the city's famous pink-sandstone cathedral, Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg, and walked around until we chanced upon the city's main Christmas tree on Place Kleber.

We then called it a night and retired to our hostel, missing our families back home.

My "white" Christmas came the day after in Munich, Germany. The entire city was drenched in snow and I realized it was... not so fun. The snowflakes that always looked so pretty on Christmas cards actually felt like pellets shooting at my eyes and forehead. It was annoying. I was freezing cold despite the layers of jackets and thermal clothing I had on. It wasn't a surprise then that I was diagnosed with fever that night.

True Christmas spirit

It was only after that experience when I realized the true spirit of Christmas belongs to being at home with your family and loved ones. Even if you're in the most exotic or gorgeous city in the world, it is being home with the family that still gives you a warm and tingly sensation in your heart.

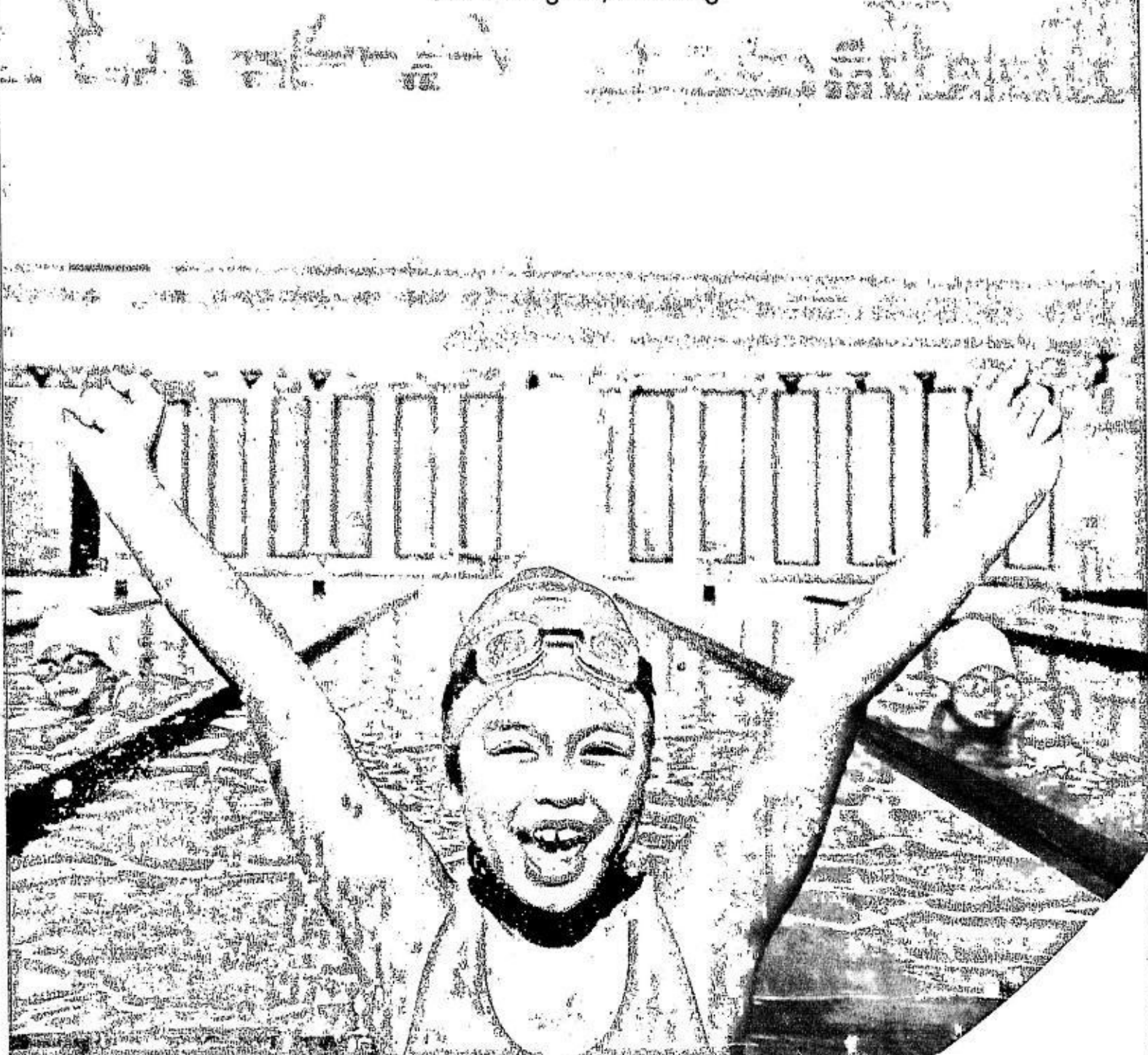
Even my white Christmas experience made me thankful I had a sunny Christmas to look forward to in Manila every year.

I love traveling and I've always wished to live in various cities around the world. But for Christmas, there's nowhere I'd rather be but home with my family.

E-mail the author at chloe_dominique@yahoo.com

"My daughter is a special child in more ways than one."

Jeff Rodriguez, Alabang



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Be one of the first to dine at the newly renovated Benjarong Royal Thai restaurant and feast on your favorite Thai dishes. Savor masterfully prepared Holiday Specials by Chef Tun from Dec. 15 to 23. The five a la carte dishes highly recommended for the Holidays are: Tom Seab Sikrong Moo (pork spareribs in sour clear soup i-san style); See Da Chom Suan (pork in red curry with coconut milk and vegetables); Khao Yam Sarai (steamed rice salad with lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves and pomelo); Pla Bai Tong (baked boneless fish with red curry and herbs in banana leaves); Praram Phaeng Sron (king prawn stuffed with minced shrimp in green curry).

A four-course set dinner menu inclusive of one round of red or white wine is offered on Dec. 24 and 31 for only P1,500 nett per person at Benjarong Royal Thai restaurant.

The stylish Tosca offers an elegant holiday fete with its special menu prepared by Chef Alessio Loddio for the Yuletide Season. Savor authentic Italian dishes on Christmas Eve Dinner, Dec. 24 and partake of the delectable 5-course set menu with unlimited Prosecco wine for only P2,800 nett per person.

For New Year's Eve dinner on Dec. 31, a 6-course set menu is offered for dinner consisting of mouth-watering Italian dishes complemented with unlimited Prosecco wine at P3,070 nett per person. And on Christmas Day, Dec. 25 and New Year's Day, Jan. 1, 2008, Tosca offers diners a special brunch buffet with unlimited Prosecco wine priced at P1,350 nett per person.

The bustling all-day dining restaurant is the perfect venue for a lively celebration with a mouthwatering lineup of traditional holiday fare in a buffet spread offered for Christmas Eve dinner at P1,600 nett per person inclusive of unlimited iced tea or chilled juice and New Year's Eve Dinner at P1,800 nett per person, inclusive of free-flowing Prosecco sparkling wine.

Christmas will never be complete without the traditional Filipino delicacies such as the Puto Bumbong and Bibingka offered during the Holidays. Various delectable preparations are available according to your liking from Dec. 1, 2007 to Jan. 6, 2008 at the hotel lobby.

Savor authentic Japanese cuisine at its finest at Umu. Avail of the special 7-course menu inclusive of a choice of a glass of red or white house wine during the "Kaiseki Night" on Dec. 24, Christmas Eve dinner and Dec. 31, New Year's Eve dinner for P2,500 nett per person.

On Dec. 25, bring your family and friends for an a la carte lunch and dinner treat featuring the "Nihon Tsokusuou Talabagani Kaki Wagyu Pair". Select from among the three preparations such as steamed or grilled Japanese Crab, Japanese Oyster and Wagyu Beef according to your preference.

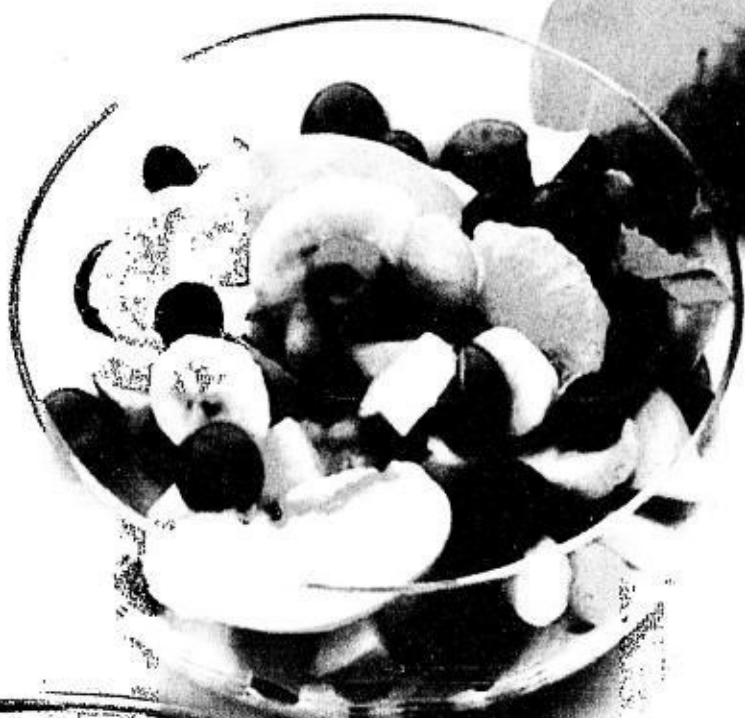
Voted as the Best Filipino Restaurant by the readers of Philippine Tatler's "Philippines Best Restaurants," Fiesta San Miguel continues to satisfy diners with innovative and mouthwatering dishes.

Fiesta San Miguel lets you enjoy the festive season with its Filipino Christmas Eve Dinner Treat featuring a 5-course set menu offered on Dec. 24 for P1,230 nett per person only.

Celebrate the Holidays at Dusit Hotel Nikko and experience gracious hospitality at its best.

For inquiries and reservations, call 867-3333.

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Succulent fruits deserve nothing but the choicest cream to complete your favorite fruit salad—Parmalat. Europe's cream expert. Enjoy its higher level of creamy goodness not only with your fruits but also for soups, dips and other dishes. Once you've experienced Parmalat, you'll definitely agree: "It's what I've been missing all along!"

STEAMED Scallops Dumplings



Cantonese celebration at Li Li brings HK to RP

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, CELEBRATE Christmas in grand Cantonese fashion as Li Li brings Hong Kong to your dining table.

On Dec. 24 and 25, Chef Choi works the wok for a special Imperial Christmas Dinner featuring unlimited appetizers, tasty fried rice, meat and vegetable dishes, the famous Double-Boiled Sea Conch and Quail Soup with Abalone and Bamboo Pith, plus six main entrées, all guaranteed to satisfy your appetite! If that's not enough,

be awed by the Imperial Peking Duck carving station and enjoy all the duck you can eat. Then, satisfy your sweet tooth at the resplendent dessert buffet.

Make the evening even more festive with our free-flowing soft drinks, local beers, and red and white or sparkling wine, all available when you order Li Li's Imperial Christmas Dinner.

Li Li Chinese restaurant is located at the fifth level of Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila. For further inquiries and reservations, call 245-1234.

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Join the Holiday Fun at Kalye Juan!



SHARE WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES the house specialty, Sisig sa Kalye—perfectly grilled pork with fresh onions, chicken liver and fresh peppers on a sizzling plate!

Match this with Bangus Kare-Kare, the popular Filipino dish that is a bestseller—the same yummy sauce with bangus belly strips!

A must try for the more adventurous is the Hito with buro—deep-fried or grilled hito wrapped in aluminum foil in a bed of mustard leaves. Complete this with a pampango delicacy, buro, which is fermented rice with fish, tomatoes and onions. Kalye Juan can be found at: CKB Building, Tomas Morato corner Scout Rallos (376-2508); GF, North Parking, SM Mall of Asia (556-0612)

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Food delights for gatherings this Christmas

CHRISTMAS GATHERINGS are best shared with family and friends. The presence of loved ones, the happy conversations, the sharing of fun and laughter, plus the comfort and joy food brings make our Christmas more memorable and special.

For this season's special gatherings and reunions, you can check the following restaurants and savor what they offer:



DEC. 26 PLATTER

Celebrate the season with groovy and heavenly treats at Cocorama & Heaven 'N Eggs. You can try its Christmas food offerings like Christmas Omelet, Simbang Gabi Special Putobungbung pancake, and December 26 Platter. Also available is Rudolph's pancake, Fruit salad waffle and Grilled ensaymada sandwich. Heaven 'N Eggs Branches are in CKB Building in Tomas Morato, Quezon City (376-2674), Ground Floor Glorietta 4 (818-2792), Fuente Circle in Eastwood City (912-1172) and Market! Market! (889-3791) and Tri Noma Mall North Triangle, Quezon City (901-3608), and Cocorama, 6th floor, The Ledge, Shangri-La Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City. It is the groovy café with a red-and-white Volkswagen kombi, mirror ball. For inquiries, call 910-0401.

SEAFOOD ESPADA COMBINATION

At Blackbeard's Seafood Island they offer a new seafood espada combination. Must try are bacon oysters fritters, balut sa aligue ala pobre, calle pirata, jumbo hito frito, panico buko seafood, pinaputok na tilapia, pomelo salad, seafood bonfire, seafood island chicken, Jamaican spicy wings, spicy crispy tadyang and streetfood sampler. Visit Blackbeard's at Eastwood City Libis, Fiesta Market! Market! Fort Bonifacio Global City and Shopwise Arcade, Araneta Center, Cubao. For reservations call 913-5701, 886-7692, 913-2694.



A Christmas (Ham) Story

TODAY, EVERY FILIPINO FAMILY'S most celebrated month is never complete without Fiesta Ham gracing the Noche Buena table for both Christmas and New Year's. Its sweet, succulent, and savory taste never fails to bring a special smile to lips as the joys and triumphs of past years are reminisced.

Which brings to mind the question of how such a decidedly western delicacy became an integral part of local culture.

In her book, "Palayok", the late writer, author, and food guru Doreen Fernandez traces the ham's place in Philippine history and culture, to the Spanish colonization.

"Ingredients ordinary in the Spanish kitchen, such as sausages (chorizos), ham (jamón), salted pork (tocino), olive oil and wine, were rare and expensive in the Philippines. But because the Spaniards were the colonial masters, their food was seen as desirable, high class, elite."

Further, the author describes:

"As the days creep towards the 25th, homes fill with more food being prepared for the family reunions and guests, especially for the Christmas eve meal, the *media noche* or *noche buena* (the evening of goodness), which some families have right after Midnight Mass, and some the morning after."

"This meal is usually in a Castilian mode, since Christianity was brought in by colonization: *jamón en dulce*, a sugar-glazed ham; slices of Edam cheese, called *queso de bola*; a fat stuffed capon or turkey-relleno, galantine, or *pavo embuchado*; walnuts and chestnuts, apples and grapes, the whole Spanish package."

And since Spanish cooking, according to Fernandez, was dominantly "fiesta cuisine", then perhaps it won't be a stretch to assume that this is why the most popular incarnation today of the *jamón en dulce*, is Fiesta Ham.

Indeed, there are many reasons why Fiesta Ham has become an indispensable Christmas treat. Aside from its sweet, delicious taste, it is also convenient to serve, because it's ready-to-eat, thoroughly cured, and cooked to perfection.

So popular is the delicacy that it has spawned many other types of hams.

The Pear-Shaped Ham, carefully molded in a fancy pear shape and uniquely enhanced with an aromatic blend of sweet and salty flavors, is an all-around favorite.

Jamón de Bola, another popular variant, is a sweet, smoked lean meat ham with a round shape and usually glazed.

Slightly sweet and juicy, the Noche Buena Brick Ham is an attractive addition to any Noche Buena table setting.

With Chinese culture having as much of an influence to us as Spain's, the Chinese Ham has emerged as another family favorite.

A unique fusion of sweet, salty and spicy oriental flavors, this ham brings out a delightful Chinese twist to any holiday feast.

Chicken-lovers are not left out, as there is now also Chicken Ham. Smoked and glazed with sugar, it is made from a plump whole chicken molded to keep its shape, a definite alternative for health buffs.

Hamon con Queso, a new innovation that is starting to become popular, combines the goodness of ham with another popular Christmas treat: cheese. It is whole ham made of prime meat speckled with rich bits of cheese.

This Christmas season, value-added meats maker Purefoods-Hormel Company, makers of Purefoods Fiesta Ham, dubbed the "star of the Noche Buena season", continues to bring us these popular and much-loved ham variations which have become part of the Filipino Christmas tradition.

With these delicious and delectable hams on your tables, you can truly say that Christmas is indeed merry.

*Excerpts from Doreen Fernandez' "Palayok" used with permission from her family.



CRAB VONGOLE

All time favorites at Clawdaddy's are baby back ribs, which are succulent and tender slow-cooked baby back ribs with your choice of BBQ flavor: Watermelon, rootbeer and chipotle. Clawdaddy's King Sampler are all-American barbecue feast of Clawdaddy's baby back ribs, beef barbecue ribs, and hickory barbecue chicken. Other menu would be the Jambalaya and Crab skillet, Jambalaya and Ribs skillet, Vietnamese-style Grilled Lobster, Lemon Cream Mussels (mussels in light lemon cream soup), and Riverboat Shrimps (shrimps sautéed in Creole spices). Located at The Ledge, 6/L Shangri-La Plaza Mall Ortigas and Claw Daddy B6 Bonifacio High Street Taguig. For inquiries, call 636-5679 or 856-4785

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The old-fashioned tradition of cheese making is still being practiced under Frico's modern technology and production facilities. Meticulous care is given from the pasteurization of the milk, curdling, brining, until the cheese matures for about 16 weeks—no shortcuts, no compromises. Excellence in this craft has been their custom since the 1930s

Generations after generations have continuously trusted the brand Marca Pina, making it a famous household name among Filipinos. Therefore, if somebody wants queso de bola, it's as good as saying

"Marca Piña."

Marca Piña Queso de Bola has been sharing its cheesy goodness directly to every Filipino's taste buds from all walks of life. Not only is it associated with high quality *queso de bola*, it also means prosperity and luck. Pina is pineapple in English and pineapple is "Ong Lai" in Chinese. "Ong" means prosperity, fortune, wealth and good luck, while "Lai" is to come or is coming. Thus the significance of the pineapple found on the label.

A very ideal and versatile cheese, its flavor is characterized as slightly salty and tangy, smooth and filling. Each slice of Marca Piña has a soft spot in our hearts and place in our daily lives. Culture and tradition is now richer because of this cheese—the stuff really made for fun and feast!

Price: 1.5 kg - P735 - P745.00
750 g - P420-430.00



PUREFOODS

Fiesta Ham

STAR OF THE NOCHE BUENA

Noche Buena 2

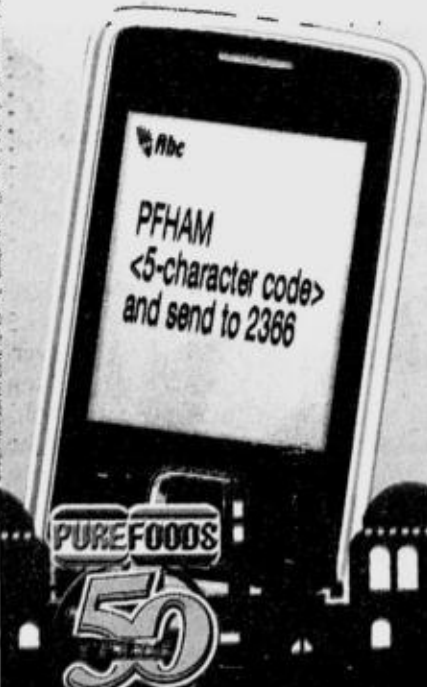
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You only need to register once.
4. Text the code by texting PFHAM<5-character random alphanumeric code> to 2366.



Noche Buena packages

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See flyers for details.

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INQUIRER



THE AUTHOR (2nd from right) working for a live morning show on Christmas day

Seeing the best in people

It was one of the hardest times in our family as my father went through intensive care a week before Christmas

By Cristina P. Agatep
2bu1 Correspondent

HAVING TO WORK ON Christmas day of 2006 was my most unforgettable Christmas ever.

Working during holidays isn't really new. I have no whines about it as my "Morning TV" job requires me to be on call all the time. But Christmas day of 2006 was the time I was both at my saddest and happiest.

It was one of the hardest times in our family as my father went through intensive care a week before Christmas.

This crisis proved that people are innately caring. I was overwhelmed by the kindness of others. Co-workers I hardly knew, people at work, even neighbors that I normally did not greet showed that they truly cared and were con-

cerned over the condition of my father. They expressed the same genuine affection I had felt from friends. I felt guilty for being anti-social.

Working on Christmas eve and Christmas day itself was an inspiration for me, because by then I was so thankful that my father's health problem was over.

I didn't care that Christmas was supposed to be a holiday for me. I was just thankful.

I was grateful for everybody's concern, for their care. It made me change the way I saw people. This jaded world, where I saw people in a mostly cynical way, made me realize that, indeed, there are so many things to be thankful for.

E-mail the author
teng_agatep@yahoo.com

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- The winner will be randomly drawn at 37th floor Robinsons Summit Center, Ayala Avenue, Makati City on January 25, 2008 at 3PM in the presence of a DTI representative. The first valid and eligible entry drawn will win. The winner will be notified thru registered mail and email and telephone within 14 days of

the winner being selected and his / her name will be published on Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippines Star and Manila Bulletin on January 31, 2008.

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²HP Handheld - Ipaq 6965, Ipaq 512, Ipaq 6828, Ipaq 5770

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Per DTINCR Permit Number 5920 Series of 2007



READER Giovanni Barrantes sent this photo of his kids, Dingay and Dingoy, taken during a family celebration in Parañaque.



CHINKAI Rosario shares this photo of her and her sister Ro-an at Ocean Park Hong Kong.

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SMART

THE POWER TO LEAD



Christmas in Cubao

For a few nights back when we were kids, we sat on the shoulders of our fathers, and we felt the spirit of the season.

By Philbert Ortiz Dy

EVEN AS A LITTLE kid, I knew Cubao was different. It wasn't anything particularly overt, but I always got the feeling from my friends that they wouldn't come to my house.

Every group work, every get-together would always be in someone else's house, no matter how inconveniently far they lived. There was just something about Cubao, maybe a stench, or just a vibe, that scared the parents of little Chinese kids. In all honesty I couldn't blame them: A walk down Aurora Boulevard was enough to tell anyone that Cubao wasn't really for kids.

But Christmas—Christmas was different. Christmas belonged to Cubao.

Few people know this, but buildings seem to age faster in Cubao. It could be due to a lot of things—the smoke on the walls, the dust on the streets, the wear and tear that comes with being so central in terms of transportation in the city.

Maybe part of it was also a lack of connection to the place; as Cubao fell apart, no one came to pick up the pieces. It wasn't very long before Cubao's sheen turned into a relentless gray, and an overall drabness came to define the place.

But Christmas would change

everything. Well, by change, I mean "cover." The general state of disrepair was still there, but it would get draped with a blanket of lights and accessorized with a myriad of decorations. At night, there would be a halo surrounding Araneta Center as a thousand little lights lit up the architecture.

Even against the regular orange glow of Cubao, the Center rang out clear and true. "It's Christmas. It's time to go to Cubao."

Bright reasons

And there were a lot of reasons to make that trip. There was Fiesta Carnival, the all-year indoor amusement park. It didn't really have much business for most of the year, but when Christmas came, the cable cars ran nonstop, and a long line would form to ride the caterpillar. A pretty decent Christmas bazaar would crop up around the Fiesta Carnival area—pretty rare back in those days.

The second reason would be Toyland up in SM Cubao. These were the days before the big toy stores had opened, and Toyland was a kid's paradise, with walls filled with rack upon rack of G.I. Joes and family computer games.

Third, there was the yearly Disney on Ice in Araneta Coliseum, where Peter Pan skillfully deflected Captain Hook's attacks with a triple axel, and chil-

dren drank colorful drinks in tumblers that they got to bring home.

And then there was COD.

By itself, COD was hardly anything special. It couldn't compete with the nearby SM, and wasn't nearly as interesting as Ali Mall. It had mostly become the place where people bought school uniforms.

But come Christmas, the façade of the building became home to an animatronic show. It would be different every year. Some years, a group of robot wise men would follow the star to find a robot Mary and Joseph cradling a robot Baby Jesus. On another year, a robot Santa Clause would ride his sleigh, drawn by robot reindeer, and travel from house to house delivering gifts to children. Robot children, of course. And it would all be incredibly amazing.

Families spent their nights on Gen. Romulo Avenue, across the street from the building, to watch the robot stories unfold.

It isn't too often in modern life that new traditions are created, but the COD became a tradition in every sense. It was something to look forward to every year, something that told people that Christmas was here. The scaffolding would come up around November, and it was heartwarming to see people building Christ's manger or Santa's workshop.

If you passed by every day,

you could see the cast of metal men growing as the scene came together. To a child like me then, that was the most wonderful thing in the world.

Glorious sight

It's kind of strange to think about it now, all the children and the parents out there on Gen. Romulo Avenue, watching the show. Just down the road, across Aurora, were the neon signs of some of the sleaziest bars Cubao had to offer. Around the corner, women waited just outside Mercury Drug, waiting for someone to take them home.

A little further down Aurora, the dankest, seediest little adult theater in the Metro showed you dirty double features for P30. Cubao was still Cubao, after all, and even the grandest of Christmas shows wouldn't change that.

But for just a few minutes on those nights, as robots filled the sky, people would forget where they were. In the time it took the Wise Metal Men to find Robot Jesus, or for Cyber Santa to make it back to the North Pole, nothing mattered except being there, being part of all of it.

It was children sitting on their father's shoulders, struggling to get a better look. It was mothers trying to figure out how to use their cameras without having to put down their Christmas shopping. It was the

cars, jeepneys, and taxis, the whole world rushing past on Gen. Romulo Avenue, and no one caring.

It was Christmas in Cubao, and it was glorious.

Cubao's changed a lot since then—or at least Araneta Center. Much of what's outside the Center is still the same, although with new paint jobs. Araneta Center is once again becoming a gleaming beacon of modernity.

The aging buildings have had a facelift, and Cubao doesn't feel so old anymore. The rustic charm is still there in some places, and the environs are still pretty seedy, but plans are afoot to have the Center become a high-density, high-class area lined with skyscrapers.

This progress will most likely radiate out from the Center, changing Cubao little by little until people eventually forget that they were ever afraid to go there.

Christmas is different as well. The lights are still there, perhaps brighter than ever, but the feeling isn't the same anymore. Fiesta Carnival moved outside, then eventually closed. The lot it used to occupy is now empty except for a couple of rides that couldn't be dismantled so easily. Train tracks still line the ground where tiny trains used to run, and it's a dismal sight.

SM Toyland isn't there anymore, either, engulfed by the

appliances section. Disney on Ice still happens every year, but no one really cares anymore post-mail-ice-skating-rink.

Missing something

Most tragically, COD is gone. The building is now a supermarket, and the show has moved to Greenhills, where it fails to capture the magic of those nights on Gen. Romulo. It just doesn't feel as special in Greenhills, surrounded as it is by the homes of some of the richest people in the country.

Without COD and its robots, Christmas in Cubao feels like it's missing something. There's less of a crackle in the air, less magic, and it starts to feel like Christmas anywhere else in the metro. And even as the lights shine brighter, the city turns a little grayer.

But sometimes, I still feel the remnants of Christmases past while walking down Cubao's well-worn streets. Even as Cubao grows farther and farther from what it was, the memory of it grows stronger in the hearts of those of us who saw robots in the sky.

It's easy to become cynical about Christmas these days, but the magic of those nights could sustain a generation. And we'll keep Christmas near and dear to us, we'll strive to keep it special, because for a few nights back when we were kids, we sat on the shoulders of our fathers, and we saw Christmas.



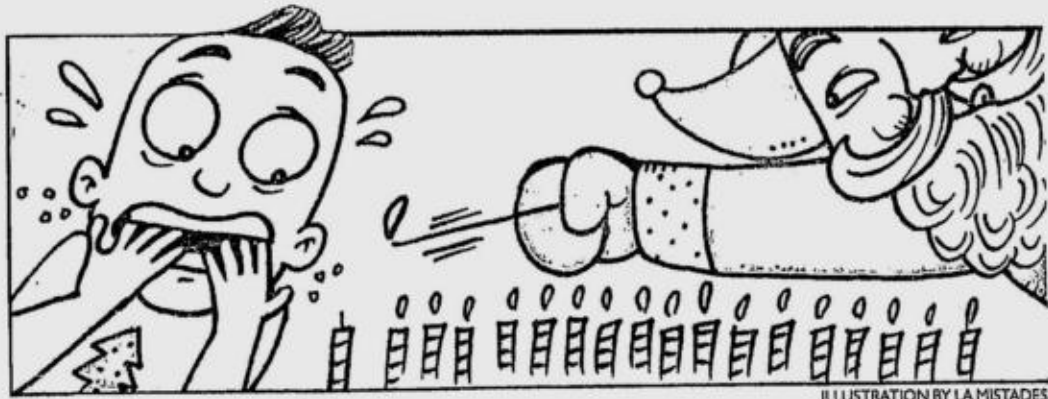


ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES

Finally growing up this CHRISTMAS

By Ronin Bautista

I WOULD START COUNTING the days before Christmas once September came, and I would make it a point to update people of the count whenever I could. Back in high school, I would write the countdown in our classroom's chalkboard and our student publication office's white board. Even if people said it was too early to be counting and that I was just too excited, I'd still update the numbers every day.

This year, I put up a digital countdown on Multiply and included a text update in my YM status messages. The next thing I knew, a high-school friend also had the same thing in his stat; and we were both excited about it.

It was fun to celebrate Christmas back home last year; we celebrated a couple of Christmases before that abroad: in Hong Kong in 2004 and in Singapore/Thailand in 2005. Not that I didn't enjoy the trip, but I really missed the way we would have Noche Buena (we had to sleep early for the flight) and other stuff that I hoped we wouldn't spend the next one out of the country. I never thought I would miss the midnight affair that much.

But as the days went from 100 days to 70, the more I came to realize that this Christmas might be different. Not that I suddenly lost the spirit, it was just that during the course of my countdown, I received a number of invitations from friends: from girls who would be having their debuts and guys who would eat out on their 18th. This brought me to one reality that this Christmas is going to be my last as a minor, and that I'll be a legal citizen of this country three days after that.

Being born on Dec. 28 is not really bad. In fact, that's another reason I loved Christmas: People are still hung up on the Yuletide hype and at the same time preparing for the New Year, and my birthday falls beautifully in between, and everybody's in a festive mood.

But after the "18" thought sunk in, I gradually lost count of the days. I didn't want to get old. I hated 18: It meant more responsibility and less reason to play around, more

I will turn 18 three days after Christmas. The thought is killing me

reason to get serious. I felt pretty down for a few days...

How much you've grown

Until I came across a birthday video of a friend, who happened to celebrate his 19th birthday late in October. We sent in some messages and a friend compiled them into a video, and in that I read something that, although it was not for me, made me understand something big.

It said no one should call it growing old, but as growing up, and it's not how many numbers you answer when people ask your age, but how much you've grown.

Then I remembered birthdays are celebrations of life, and that being sad about mine would be the saddest thing I could do to myself.

I was also reminded of Christmas, that it's a celebration of Christ's coming. He came to this world and lived like us: He played, loved, and grew up, just like we all do. Now I see it was really a shame to be dreading my 18th, I who would look through the calendar when I was young to see how close my birthday was to Christmas, and later tell everyone that if I had been born three days earlier then I had to open two gifts from each of them during Noche Buena.

I'm back to counting the days now. The second semester started with my friends celebrating their 18th, some their 19th, birthday, and they were all happy. I should, too.

Christmas carols now fill the airwaves, not as much as before but it's still noteworthy. Lights now adorn the different buildings in our campus and it's such a lovely sight whenever I go home at night. It's going to be Christmas, and there's no stopping it, the same way my birthday will come even if I used to dread it.

This might be my last birthday as a minor, but it won't be my last as a kid, for I will always be that in my heart. Besides, I guess it's about time that I do some growing up. Time will fly so fast and more Christmases will come that it won't wait for me; I have to get up and cope with it. There are no more worries, for I have my family and friends to lean on just in case I need them.

Fearing tinsel and holly

Here I am, getting more and more worried each day as we inch closer to the 25th, waiting for a hitch

CHILD at play

Text and photos by Ryan Fernandez

LAST CHRISTMAS, I FOUND myself alone in my apartment in New York, staring at microwaved leftovers of General Cho's Chicken. After smacking my lips, I jabbed my spoon in, desperate to break up the sticky, overly orange clumps of breaded chicken and broccoli.

A week later, on New Year's Eve, I rushed up the stairs to my new place in Queens, lugging a six-pack of Corona. I fumbled for my keys to no avail. Sometime between the arduous climb and the struggle to open the frozen door-knob, the world outside ushered in 2007.

I dragged myself into the bare apartment, discarded a coat, a hoodie, a sweater, and tights, uncapped a bottle of beer and promptly sat on the fuzzy, paint-scented carpet.

But, actually, it was a good year.

The same time the year before, I was in Manila, watching children shop, point, and handle realistically looking toy firearms. The year before, I was at the East Avenue emergency room, pretending to be a press photographer so I could document fireworks victims.

Interviewing people with missing fingers and gaping holes where palms should be had its own thrill, but still, I wanted to

be elsewhere.

At one point a dead person (a victim of a knife fight) was wheeled in. Though the corpse was already draped in white, two brown feet were stuck out of the sheets. It felt like a joke. A nearby blackboard contained a casualty tally. The maimed people led over the dead ones by a dozen points.

Somewhere along the way, the holiday season started to scare me. Somewhere along the way, the word "Christmas" made me nervous. The hordes of people at the malls. The driving need to buy everything and anything. The shopping guides. The wish lists. The must-haves.

The news showing children with bandaged hands sobbing and TV specials recapping the year's disas-

ters, and the always-hopeful wishes for a better year to come.

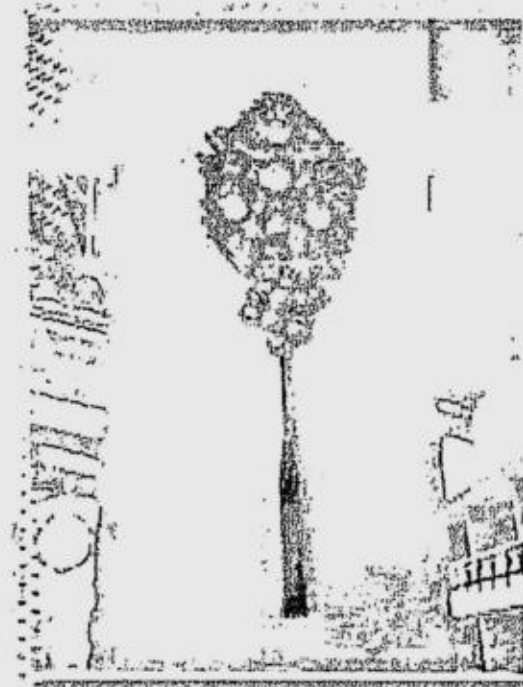
Don't get me wrong: I like this time of the year. The smell of *bibingka*, the carolers, the big, fat, white man trying to get into my house despite it lacking a chimney. I'm glad to just be alive.

But for some reason, something, *something* always happens. So here I am, getting more and more worried each day as we inch closer to the 25th, waiting for a hitch. Waiting for disappointment to rear its ugly head, and say, "All this holiday cheer? It's just tinsel, my friend. You should know better than that."

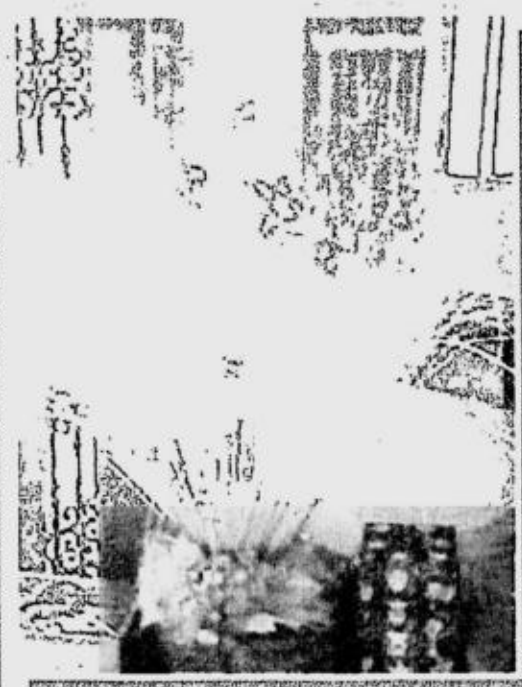
E-mail the author at ry.fern@gmail.com



AUTHOR (left) spending Christmas in New York



WALL hanging made of badminton racquet



DELIGHTFUL spray

Recycled decor

By Auskee del Prado

WE CAN MAKE CHRISTMAS decor out of discarded stuff. Here are some of the decorations we made for our office.

We've turned badminton racquets into lanterns, and made Christmas ornaments out of junk. It's cheap, convenient and environment-friendly. Give recycling a try this season!



TREE decked out in recycled material

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Great Christmas, deal or no deal

Family presentations add to the fun of our clan reunions

By Nikki Laynes

FOR THREE YEARS now, our clan has been celebrating the annual Christmas reunion with a contest. On Christmas eve, all of my relatives from the province gather at my grandmother's house to celebrate Christmas.

To make the party more exciting, my grandmother in 2004 decided that every family should present a show.

An aunt from Germany sponsored the competition; that means she was going to give the prizes. First prize was P5,000, and there were consolation prizes.

Now it so happened that my mom was so driven to win. She came up with an idea. Since we were all Disney babies (we were raised watching Disney movies!), and there are five girls in our family (my four sis-

ters and I) plus our mom, she decided that we'd do a Disney show.

She assigned a character for each one of us—Mulan, Little Mermaid, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella (me!), Beauty and the Beast (my mom and dad). We prepared the costumes, the music, and choreographed the whole show. Some were made to sing, some danced, and some did both.

The night of the competition, we were ready and confident to win. We were chosen to present first, and the others were very surprised and amused. They didn't think that we prepared that much, and I must admit, my mom's idea was pretty good.

After our presentation, the others felt they had no chance of winning since they didn't prepare much. They didn't think anybody would give much thought about it. The parents or adults weren't that concerned, but the kids, my cousins, sulked. They had been telling their par-

ents to practice, but their parents were either too busy or just didn't care. Now they were regretting that they weren't able to come up with a better presentation.

Since it seemed we were the only ones who prepared, my grandmother decided to call off the competition. Instead, she decided to give us a vaseful of chocolate coins—imported I guess, with the glass vase more valuable than those inside it, but much less than the supposed prize. A bit unfair, I think.

Magic show

December 2005: Now everybody was preparing for each presentation. We decided to present (again, my mom's idea) a magic show! My dad's going to be the magician, and we were supposed to be the dancers and the assistants.

My mom hired someone to do our costumes and then we practiced our dance steps and blockings. My dad decided to go for a

look-like—an Indian or a genie—with a chaleco and a turban. We also had to prepare appropriate music for the show.

Ha ha! It was a blast! The others didn't anticipate it. Although my dad (who practiced the tricks just earlier that day) failed on a trick, he managed to get the audience roaring with laughter and entertainment.

Though it was a little messy presentation, the idea was unique as compared to the others; its impact was greater.

We won. We were happy. My bachelor-uncle sponsored the prizes. But they decided to reduce the first prize and increase the lower prizes, after, of course, our presentation. A bit unfair, I think.

Game show

December 2006: My mom had an idea again. It seemed like she's always prepared for this. She wanted a "Deal or No Deal" show. There are six girls total—my youngest sister was to play Kris Aquino, and the

rest of us were to be the 26K. My dad would be the banker, and he was so excited that he devised his radio set and headsets for "Kris."

My mom then again thought that we should be dressed in those sexy outfits the girls in "Deal or No Deal" wore. So she decided to hire someone again to make our green spaghetti tank-top dresses.

Since there were only five of us as the 26K, we had two "briefcases" each so that there were 10 amounts to choose from. My dad asked one of his construction workers to make the stands and my sister and I made the envelopes with the amounts written on them (the briefcases).

Then there was the music I had to download with the opening music, banker's music and tension music (it's the one you hear when a contestant is thinking of what briefcase to open, and when to press the button or not).

It was fun preparing and

dancing since we had to practice the dance steps the 26K girls do at the start of the show. Ours was all manual—there was a big illustration board for the amounts, and one of us had to strike out the amount which was opened.

The audience was happy! They enjoyed the show and they were very much entertained. We gave a real prize by the way; the highest was P1,000, and the lowest was P1. The winning contestant got P800.

The others presented a Nativity play and several dance shows. But we didn't win. The winner was one of the families that danced a folk dance crossed with modern steps and music. All of us were surprised. Even the winning family was surprised.

That was a year ago, and Christmas is here again. My mom's reply after we asked her what we're going to present this year, "Ah, mag-'Deal or No Deal' pa rin tayo every year hanggang magsawa sila."



Simple, painful holidays

By Albert Miranda

ROBIN WILLIAMS' CHARACTER in "One Hour Photo" said something to this effect: "We usually photograph only the happy moments in our lives and leave the sad ones."

The same goes with Christmas celebrations. When Christmas is brought up, images of parties, gift giving/receiving, no-diet feasts, *noche buena* and class or family reunions are top of mind. It is unusual to hear someone relating how unpleasant Christmas is, not unless he or she is The Scrooge.

I also share those candy-coated, unfortunately naive perceptions of Christmas. However, these types of Christmas celebrations are too generic to be considered memorable. It is ironic that the most memorable Christmas for me involved the simplest and most painful one.

In December 2002, I was recuperating from my first (and hopefully last) major operation: an appendectomy. I had almost died because my appendix had exploded before I got to the hospital. The poisonous substance slowly paralyzed me, preventing me from walking.

It scared the hell out of me to be under the knife. But thanks to the wonders of anesthesia, I never felt a single pain during the surgical procedure. But post-operation was a different story.

No matter how many antibiotics I took, my surgery wound got infected. Cleaning it was a nightmare, not only for me, but for my loving mother as well. She suffered the same sleepless nights, attending to my needs and making sure that I was comfortable despite fluctuating body temperature caused by stubborn fever.

No other grand party or expensive gift can really match the satisfaction of being with one's family

My dad was in constant anxiety, too, checking regularly if I was okay. And my sister, although not showy with her feelings, expressed her moral support. Friends, classmates and relatives came to visit me either in the hospital or in our house.

More traumatic was that I never could eat a Bavarian cream-filled donut for almost a year after that, because of the cream's strong resemblance to pus!

Due to the physical and financial constraints caused by my hospitalization, we had to make our *noche buena* as simple as possible that year. All the trimmings were considered unnecessary. But despite this reduced setting, I really enjoyed it. What made the difference was the fact that we were a complete family during these tumultuous times.

Cliché as it may sound, no other grand party or expensive gift can really match the satisfaction I felt during those times.

What made that Christmas also more meaningful was the realization that I was given a second lease on life. It's like being reborn with a purpose. Whatever that purpose may be, I am grateful that I am alive today with the opportunity to be a better person everyday. There are no pictures to prove the difficulties I had experienced, but my scar reminds me of that Christmas all the time.



21-year-old Rafael Banzuela III sent in this Christmas artwork, saying, "This is something I did back in 2006 when I was into cyborgs. The child in the 'Pagsabit ng Parol' is not the Terminator type, but someone more melancholic and frail. A robot, but still human."



In the case of the Walkman phones, style and substance aren't exclusive of each other



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www.inquirer.net/lifestyle
Send us your feedback:
e-mail: style@inquirer.com.ph
or 283 (Smart)

W660i

Make Sweet music this Christmas

By Bianca Consunji
2BU Correspondent

ASK EVERY OTHER high-school or college kid what he or she wants for Christmas, and you'll probably get a prompt reply: an mp3 player.

Portable music players in all shapes, colors and sizes are flying off the shelves this season, and with good reason—they're light, sleek and have powerhouse memories that can support thousands of files.

However, not everyone wants to carry around a boatload of gadgets (imagine rummaging in your bag and getting caught in a tangle of wires). For people who like keeping things simple, a multimedia cell phone is your best bet.

Sony Ericsson recently released a line of Walkman phones tailor-made for different types of cell-phone users.

One of their top-of-the-line models, the W910i, appeals to the fashion-conscious set. Its sleek exterior, large LCD screen and smooth finish make it look like the ultimate trendsetter's phone, but its specs can satisfy even the most discriminating techie geeks.

The W910i comes in Hearty Red (a matte-red metal finish) and Noble Black. If you're looking for attention, the W910i is the phone for you.

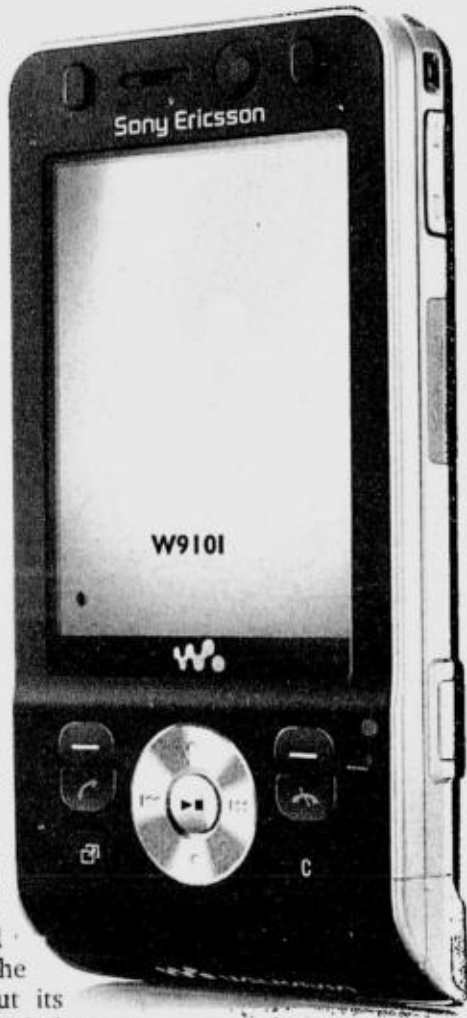
For those who want their phones simple but still loaded with features—the model to check out is the W660i, a Walkman phone with a classic design 3G phone that belies its high-tech specs. Available in Record Black and Rose Red (sleek red metal embossed with a floral pattern), the phone is light and compact. Ideal for klutzes who often drop their phones and for people who text a lot (the keyboard lets you tap out messages fast) the design is also the most user-friendly of the series.

Sports lovers, on the other hand, will love the W580i. At only 14-mm thin, it's one of the smallest and slimmest of the Sony Ericsson Walkman phones. The W580i is made for people with an active lifestyle, with features that complement your fitness routine. Equipped with a pedometer and calorie counter, the phone not only keeps you entertained with hours of music, but will help keep you fit as well.

All Walkman phones can carry hundreds of full-length tracks; the W580i and W660i can store about 470 songs with the 512-mb Memory Stick Micro that they come with.

If you feel like upgrading, a 1-gb memory stick (which comes with the W990i) can get you about 1,000 full-length tracks. Tired of the songs on your track list? Switch to FM radio to get your fill of the latest tunes (check out the light effects on the W580i while you're playing music).

Speaking of radio tunes, if you hear a



W910i

Win a Sony Ericsson Walkman phone!

YOUR SONY ERICSSON Walkman phone music playlist includes all your favorite music all the time. What you hear is the soundtrack of your life.

So what was playing when you felt the highs of passing that final exam or the first day of vacation? What was playing when you got together or broke up and made up? Give us the best of your music memories to the weekly question and win a brand new Sony Ericsson Walkman phone!

This week's question is: Another hour on the jeep, bus or train. What do you listen to when you commute?

E-mail your answer to sonyericsson2bu@gmail.com. Include your name, age and contact information plus the song title, artist and music genre. Deadline is on Dec. 21.

A unique and funny answer will get you the Sony Ericsson W660i Walkman phone.

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Happy Holidays!

Svenson saved my hair!

- Joey Marquez
Actor / Businessman

For funnyman Joey Marquez, hairloss isn't something to laugh about. "I started losing my hair when I was about 35 years old," he recalls. "I was being called 'monsignor' because the bald spot on my head was increasing to the size of a monsignor's cap! You look older with less hair. And nobody wants to look old! But I didn't want to wear a wig either. With the Svenson treatments, I got back my real, natural hair! It was thicker and healthier. It made me look absolutely younger! Svenson saved me from hairloss!"

To restore your hair, call now for a FREE consultation. Save your hair at Svenson!

Svenson

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Oishi you a Merry Christmas!

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA



A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA



PUGAD BABOY

BY RM. JUNIOR



GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS



BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT



ATOMO AND WEBBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO



LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO



KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA



BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON



DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

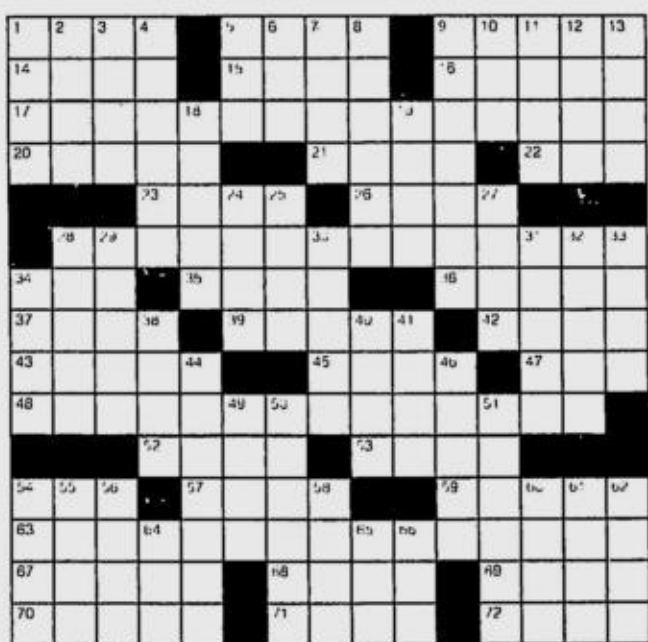
CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

ACROSS

- 1 Stir up
- 5 Choir member
- 9 Selassie worshipper, for short
- 14 Gillette razor
- 15 Quarter-moon tide
- 16 Carl of the gridiron
- 17 Best Director, 1993
- 20 Postulate
- 21 Marquis de
- 22 "History of Rome" author
- 23 Cassius
- 24 Later or slipper
- 26 Social affairs
- 28 1993 movie
- 34 Golf score
- 35 Hand over
- 36 Quilt filler
- 37 God of love
- 39 Long stories
- 42 Catcher Tony
- 43 More rational
- 45 Fashion magazine
- 47 Nile viper
- 48 1985 movie
- 52 Art colony in New Mexico
- 53 Scorch
- 54 TV spots
- 57 Small beds
- 59 Labors
- 63 2002 movie
- 67 Obliterate
- 68 Composer
- 69 Khachaturian
- 70 Goller
- 71 Painter of ballet dancers
- 71 Singer Horne
- 72 Thicket unit

DOWN

- 1 Coarse file
- 2 Football great
- 3 Graham
- 4 Peeves
- 5 Extravagant
- 6 Sheridan or
- 7 Sothern
- 8 Guitarist Paul
- 9 Bugle call

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

12/19/07

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

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- 8 Narcotic
- 9 Free
- 10 Mass vestment
- 11 Musher's vehicle
- 12 Actress
- 13 Hatcher
- 13 Jason's vessel
- 18 Theory of moral values
- 19 German river
- 24 Icelandic poem
- 27 Lose traction
- 28 Old-time actress
- 29 Old hag
- 30 French cubist
- 31 Conception of perfection
- 32 Have a feeling
- 33 Snare
- 34 Annoyance
- 38 Splinter group
- 40 Swiss peaks
- 41 Turn on a pivot
- 44 Ugly bugs, briefly
- 46 Muse of poets
- 49 Weaver's frame
- 50 Bony
- 51 Author of "A Remembrance of Things Past"
- 54 Scored a hole-in-one
- 55 Challenge
- 56 Doe's mate
- 58 Father
- 60 Cake finisher
- 61 Wash
- 62 Old dagger
- 64 R.E. Lee's nation
- 65 Summer cooler
- 66 Singer Sumac

YOU BORN TODAY: Whether your passion is obvious or you choose to play it low-key, you easily strike a chord in others. People respond emotionally to you. You're amazingly resilient. You can overcome big obstacles and still stay on your course. Many people admire you, especially younger people. The year ahead will involve major changes, perhaps as significant as something around 1999.

Birthdate of: Jake Gyllenhaal, actor; Jennifer Beals, actress; Alyssa Milano, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Any kind of study will go extremely well today. You want to get to the bottom of big ideas, especially related to politics, religion and philosophy. You want to introduce good into the world.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your research abilities are astounding today. You'll find whatever you're looking for. You also might discover secrets about your partner's earnings or wealth.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Discussions with others are very intense today. Someone is really ready to lay it all on the line. This means you had better listen! (Oh yeah.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Choose work that requires attention to detail and steady perseverance. You will complete monumental tasks today simply because you set your mind to it. Nothing can stop you.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can be extremely influential with children and young people today. They will listen to you and follow what you say. Therefore, make sure you have something valuable and wise to offer.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Family discussions are intense. People are inclined to want to improve each other and, of course, this always goes over like a lead balloon. Be careful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have the mind of a detective today. It's as if you have X-ray vision. You'll be able to spot a phony a mile away.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might come up with an entirely new source of income today. Write down your moneymaking ideas. You certainly can see how to improve your job or how you earn money.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're unusually convincing today. People definitely will step aside to let you go wherever you want. If you're in sales or you teach or act, others will be amazed.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Go after any secrets or useful information you're trying to find. You will find it! Nothing can escape you today. You have the research skills of a genius.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might encounter a very powerful person today who will likely teach you something. Possibly, you're the powerful person teaching someone else.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Talk to bosses, parents, teachers and authority figures about introducing reform or better ways of doing things. Others will listen to you now. In fact, you are impressed.

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★

12/19

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

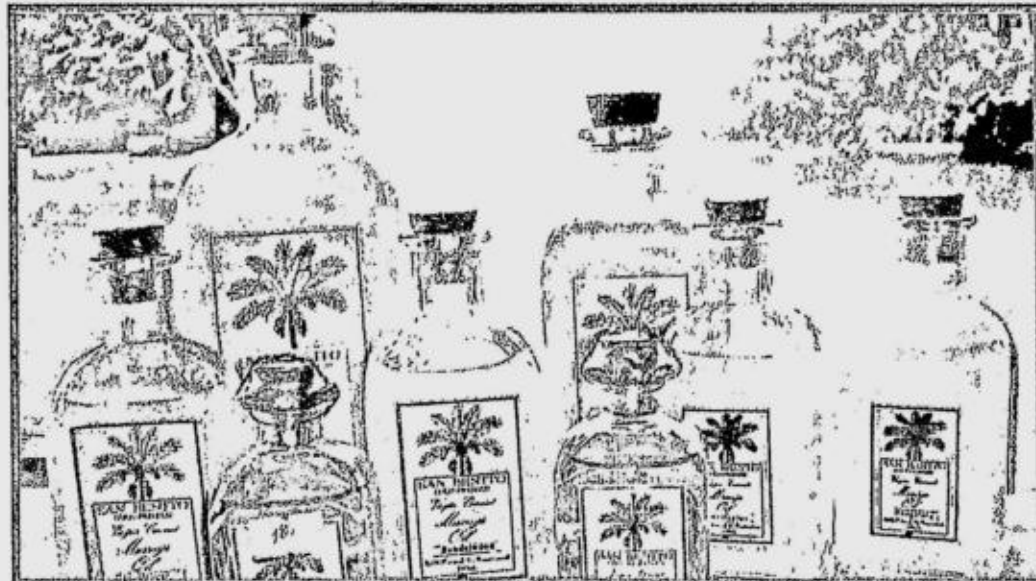
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle



Difficulty Level ★★



VIRGIN coconut oil produced and sold in The Farm

LEFT: The Farm at San Benito. Right: Healthy food means a healthy lifestyle.



Password

Serena Gelb

Natural beverage and natural health

LAST WEEKEND, I VISITED the Farm in San Benito. It is a beautiful oasis of lush greenery in Lipa City, Batangas.

It's not too far away—a little less than a two-hour drive from Manila (depending on the unpredictable traffic, of course). It has large grounds to explore or jog in; a lovely spa with excellent, well-trained (and strong) therapists; a clinic (that offers treatments of blood analysis, colonics, etc); and an extremely healthy 100-percent vegan restaurant.

Some people feel like they have to travel across the seas to Hawaii or Bali to get away from the smog of the big city. But, actually, you will get the same experience in The Farm. It's clean, green and serene! There's no pollution and your lungs can just breathe.

"You cannot get any closer to Eden than this," said one of the Farm's many guests. The motto over there is "Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food." One great thing about the food there is that 85-percent of it is "live" or raw.

Raw foods, according to chef Napoleon Arrieta, contain enzymes that cooked foods do not.

Enzymes are crucial catalysts for every bodily function and are present in a perfect balance in all raw foods provided by nature.

Enzymes are destroyed by heating foods above 42°, Arrieta added. He shared with me some delightful recipes and tips for a healthier lifestyle.

Everything that comes out of their kitchen is not only healthy, it's also extremely delicious. And the setting is breathtaking: there is an open-air terrace, overlooking the green canopy of a tropical rainforest.

"It's an experience that you have to taste to believe," a guest said.

Green Juice

Their signature drink, the "Green Juice," is a blend of fresh greens and *buko*, and is extremely healthy.

The green color may not appeal to everyone's eyes, and at first it may take some willpower to gulp it down, but the drink is quite yummy. If you're in the mood for a health shake that is a little more fun, try one of the simple and easy recipes below!

Every morning for breakfast, I would start with *muesli* (swill cereal with fruit and yogurt) and accompany it with their "Chocolate Vitalizer." It's like a healthy chocolate milkshake.

All you need are some bananas, nut milk (such as al-

mond milk, or even soy milk—you can buy them at Healthy Options in Serendra or other locations), carob, cinnamon, *buko* meat, some chocolate cream and a bit of salt. It's very easy to make, since you just put all of the ingredients in a blender and blend thoroughly.

1 pc banana
½ c nut milk (soy, almond)
1 tsp carob (optional)
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ c *buko* meat
½ tbsp honey
1 tbsp chocolate powder (unsweetened)
Pinch of salt (optional for additional electrolytes)

Exotica

Another favorite of mine is called "Exotica." With pineapples, *buko* juice, bananas and honey, it truly has the taste of the tropics all mixed into a fruity shake!

1 slice pineapple
½ c *buko* juice
¼ pc orange
1 pc banana
½ pc pear or apple (optional)
½ tbsp honey
1 tbsp lime juice
Pinch of salt (optional)
(Again, make sure you blend all of the ingredients thoroughly.)

Pop quiz! What is the iconic symbol in the tropical archipelago of the Philippines? Palm trees and coconuts of course (or *buko* as we Filipinos call them!)

Buko juice with tender *buko* meat is tasty, refreshing and nutritious. It is a staple in my diet. In fact, Virgin Coconut Oil (which The Farm uses in its cooking, massage oil and facial products) is acclaimed by some as the healthiest food product in the world.

Even my American dad says "A *buko* a day keeps the doctor away." Nothing quenches one's thirst more than a fresh *buko* shake, and it is possibly one of the easiest shakes to make. All you need is a *buko*, lime, honey and salt.

Buko Shake

½ c *buko* meat
¾ c *buko* juice
1 tbsp lime
½ tbsp honey (optional)
Pinch of salt (optional)
All of the above drinks will leave you cooled and refreshed on any hot, muggy Manila day, and are fast and easy to make. So, what are you waiting for?

Visit <http://thefarm.com.ph>
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12 months 0% Php5,000 less
18 months 0%

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PHILIPS
sense and simplicity

Fun crackers for New Year! **Oishi**

Make sweet music this Christmas



From page E1

song you like on the radio but didn't quite catch the title, you can use the patented TrackID technology to find what the song is.

Just record a few seconds of the track, and phone will zero in on the beats and melodies of the song and help you identify it by sending a clip to the Gracenote Mobile MusicID database. After finally finding out the title and artist of the song, you can use the Disc2Phone music management software to transfer it to your unit after downloading it from your computer.

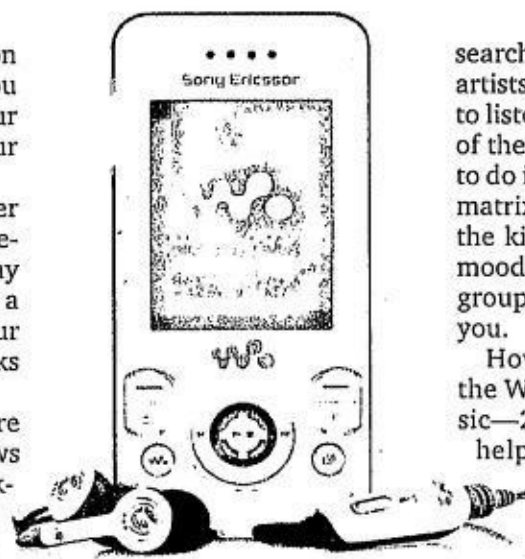
Hardcore music fans can also add music accessories to their Walkman phones. Two sets of optional speakers—the Portable

Speakers MPS-70 and Snap-on Speakers MPS-75—help you share your music with your friends (instead of keeping your earphones on the whole day).

Take high tech a step further with the Bluetooth Music Receiver, which allows you to play phone music directly through a home stereo (you can use your phone to skip through tracks and adjust the volume).

The new phones also feature Shake Control, which allows users to change tracks by shaking the cell phone like a pin-ball machine. Skip one song forward by flicking your phone to the right, or take a step backwards by shaking it to the left. Shuffle your playlist by shaking it back and forth.

Another feature to check out



W580i

is SensMe, which allows you to search your music collection and create playlists by basing them on tempo and style, which can be more practical than

searching for songs based on artists and albums if you want to listen to a varied mix of songs of the same genre. All you have to do is to go by the phone's dot-matrix system in order to track the kind of music you're in the mood for, and SensMe will group the tracks together for you.

However, there's more to the Walkman phones than music—2-megapixel cameras can help you catch goofy moments fast, while 3G technology (for the W660i and W990i) allows video conferencing; 3D games like The Sims also make for hours of endless entertainment.

While there's plenty of room for pure entertainment, the

phones don't lack on serious features, such as high-speed web surfing. Check your e-mail at the click of a button, or take a video call from your boss—it's all possible.

To be able to maximize all the features of the phone, you'll need a lot of battery.

Thankfully, the battery life of the phones last long, so you can go for days without charging.

Also, while we don't encourage dropping your phones every day, you can be sure that your Sony Ericsson unit won't fall apart on a single fall. In the case of the Walkman phones, style and substance aren't exclusive of each other.

E-mail the author at bianca-consunji@yahoo.com

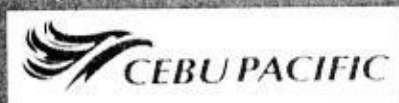
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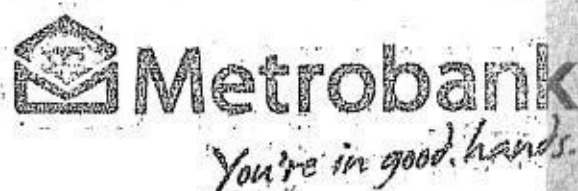


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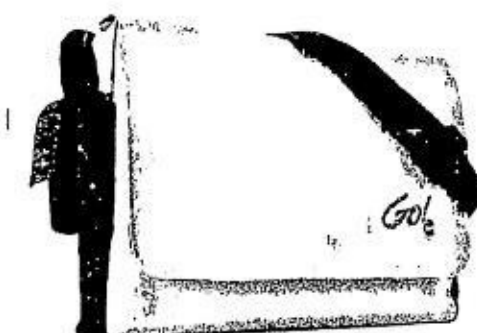
If that's not enough, Go! MasterCard credit cardholders can also triple their rewards from October 26, 2007 to January 15, 2008 for every P200 spent at any Robinsons Retail Store or Cebu Pacific ticket offices* during the promo period.

So Go! ahead and have fun with your Christmas shopping. Because with Go! MasterCard, your reward is in the Bag!

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www.cebupacificair.com/download/go_mc_ticketoffice.doc to view participating Cebu Pacific ticket offices.

Cebu Pacific ticket purchases are excluded from the Sling Bag promo.



Molly, my twin



By Irene C. Perez

I HAVE BEEN SLEEPING WITH A stuffed bear for 17 years. Childish for someone in her mid-20s, you might think, but she is still the best Christmas present I have gotten to date.

A European trip might be the only thing that could top her (or a Chanel 2.55), although I am not even sure of that.

People, meet Molly, my stress ball, "shrink" and pretty much my surrogate sibling. I can still remember how I thanked and kissed my mum when she gave me the huge gift, how my heart raced as I tore off the red foil and was the happiest, chubby 8-year-old that Christmas of 1989. She has been my roommate since.

Ate Leng, my older cousin, baptized her "Molly," from Demi Moore's character in "Ghost." I didn't see the movie till I was in high school, on VHS—or was it Betamax?—because I was shooed off the theater, and the same cousin was so disappointed that she dropped me home and watched the movie with our other cousins, sniff.

Remember the time when everyone

Molly may just be a teddy bear, but I don't know how I could have survived deaths, adolescence, taxes without the calm she's given me



IRENE PEREZ

had that cropped 'do and "Unchained Melody" was the coolest song known to man? That's when Molly was born.

Best pal

Molly has seen everything about me. I hugged her tight when I freaked out after I got my period. She was with me and my mom while we were bawling our eyes out the morning after my dad died, when I was 12 and we both couldn't get out of bed. She saw me being bullied in grade school. She heard me purging after every meal in high school, scared that no gown would fit me come prom night.

There was also a time when Molly was "banned." Blame my dermatologist, she suspected that my major ac-

ne breakout during fifth grade was caused by the "toy." But I refused that she be kept in the cabinet, so my mom and I agreed that Molly should stay somewhere near the headboard, but no hugging or contact of any sort was allowed.

She was there while I prepared for every graduation, recognition and awarding ceremony from prep school till college. She saw me through teen angst, through drunk and insomniac nights. She kept me company when my mom and I had a falling out (tough times for an only child), until all the dramatics were waived and we patched things up in college.

And Molly caught the tears that first love and first, eh, heartbreak brought a few years back (yeah, I'm a pathetic late-bloomer). She also knows the real score behind the "partial, unofficial relationships," all the way to the legit one I have been happily keeping for almost two years now.

Molly has seen me grow up through being bullied to being the bully, through geekhood to gaining some cool, through a seesaw of weight gain and loss that could rival Oprah's, not to mention being a hair-treatment junkie with abused hair that has been straightened, permed, relaxed, rebonded, rehabbed.

She is the keeper of secrets and fantasies—from the hardcore to stuff my (or your) mother would rather not know, stuff that aren't 2bU-friendly and I'd rather not see print (wink, wink).

A then-5-year-old nephew asked me: "Pano si Molly 'pag nag-asawa ka na?" I told him: "I don't know."

I get withdrawal symptoms when I sleep away from her for long periods. But I don't think she's fit to be an heirloom piece no matter how vintage she is.

Her stuffing has been compressed from years worth of embrace so she's a quarter less of her original size, her tongue was lost over the years, and her color has shifted from orange to brown, white to gray.

Still, she is my comfort zone and it will be her debut next year (*dalagana*). I greet her happy birthday every Christmas eve, and make it a point to wash her well beforehand.

Molly may just be a teddy bear, but she is love, and I don't know how I could have survived deaths, adolescence, taxes without the calm she's given me.

E-mail the author at iperez@inquirer.com.ph

Santa's alive

From page F1

The Gift of Fine Quality PEARLS for Christmas

With the spirit of gift giving and the holidays just around the corner, it's time to spread joy and glad tidings to the people we love and all the women of our lives. Metro Gaisano Jewelry dept. aides you in this arduous task: shopping for the perfect gift. Treasuring her with the gift of fine quality pearls would surely bring a swell of joy to her heart and a tear of happiness to her eye.

Metro suggests these line of pearl gifts:

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For Your Grandma

Recognize her with the elegance that she deserves: Give her a classic Tahitian black pearl pendant or earrings set in diamonds. Also exotic and eye catching, they are treasured for their rare natural black color and looks especially good on a person of age.



For your Daughter(s)

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Hoops - Hoop pearl earrings adds a feminine touch with their graceful curves.

Dangling - moves with the wearer and are always eye catching. Gives the wearer a refined and sophisticated look.



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help set up the presents for my two younger siblings, who had excitedly written their letters to Santa. She agreed, but in the rush of the holidays, forgot to take me along during the shopping trip for "Santa's presents."

So on Christmas Eve, faced with the prospect of two disappointed siblings the next morning, I rambled through the house in search of trinkets and candy. Anything that could pass for a Santa Claus gift.

It was past midnight when I set down a badly wrapped action figure for my brother, and a cheap plastic doll for my sister. "They'll feel bad about Santa this year," I told my mom, sighing.

There were the beginnings of fine lines around her eyes, and she looked tired. "It's okay," she said. "They're getting old anyway. Besides, we got them other gifts so maybe they won't be as disappointed with their Santa Claus presents."

I shrugged and went to my room after taking one last look at the forlorn presents under the tree. "That's a sad way to stop believing in Santa Claus."

The next morning, I woke up early, as I had done on other Christmas mornings. But there was no reason for me to jump out of bed, no breathless anticipation of shiny toys and sweets. I lay still, staring at the ceiling and wondering what adults did on Christmas mornings.

I was just about to wriggle back under the blankets for another hour of sleep when my brother burst into the room with a round of loud whoops, followed by my equally excited sister. They pulled off my blankets and hopped around the bed.

"We got our presents! We got our presents!"

"Fine," I said, clambering back to the comfort of my bed. "So open them."

"You're just jealous because you didn't write to Santa Claus this year," my sister giggled. "But come down with us!"

Wondering what was so exciting about cheap plastic toys, I followed my siblings to the living room. There, nestled under the tree, were two boxes wrapped in gold foil; two cards covered with elaborate cursive handwriting were perched atop the presents.

I sucked in my breath. "I can't believe it!" I ran to the boxes and ran my finger over the matte gold paper. "Santa Claus is real!"

Youthful revelry

The hour that followed was a flurry of bright ribbons and scraps of paper flying into the air. There were dolls with pink cheeks and rainbow-colored stickers and stationery sets for my sisters, while my brother got tiny model airplanes and sleek chrome trucks. The stockings they had hung on the tree were crammed with peppermints and butterscotch candy and chocolate, which we all started on immediately.

"Hey, you haven't had your breakfast yet," dad protested when he saw us with our mouths full of caramel.

At 13, I was already starting to get clothes and perfume for Christmas, but I joined in the youthful revelry of my siblings and their giddiness that Santa Claus came through once again.

That night, I pulled out my journal. "Today was magical," I wrote. "And Santa Claus is real. I woke up thinking the day would just be another ordinary one, but I think that for anyone who believes, the magic of Christmas is real."

A few months later, I eventually realized that my parents were really behind the Santa Claus gifts, but there were no disappointments left, only contentment. I was duped for another year, but that last gullible Christmas morning proved to be one of the best gifts I have ever received.

It's been 10 years since then, but Santa still lurks around on Christmas morning at our house. Since then, I've been staying up until the early hours of the morning, waiting for the carols to stop playing and for the giggles to subside. Then, I bring out my sack of secret goodies.

My siblings know that it's no longer Santa who fills their socks with jellybeans and chocolate (and the occasional lumpy potato or evil-smelling onion) but we all play along on Christmas morning, shaking all the gifts under the tree and having chocolate for breakfast.

Santa might have stopped leaving elaborately wrapped gifts under the tree, but he left an infinitely better legacy that Christmas—one that has lasted long after the sleek chrome trucks and pink-cheeked dolls lost their splendor.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

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Party for all ages

By Fran de la Rosa Katigbak

UNTIL LAST YEAR, nobody knew how old or exactly when my grandfather, Marciano, was born.

One of his daughters, in an attempt to complete requirements for his passport application, discovered that records since the 1920s at the municipal hall in Lolo Ciano's Lipa hometown had been lost and were thus irretrievable.

Although the family would celebrate on the month he was supposedly born, Lolo Ciano's age had always been some sort of a guessing game. If anyone asked, his children would tentatively reply: "Ah, nasa mga otsenta yata (He's in his 80s)."

It was the same answer every year. He would have more wrinkles, develop poorer eyesight, become hard of hearing yet he remained in the same age bracket.

After Lolo Ciano's children finally got hold of a copy of his birth certificate from the church where he was

LOLA Carmen and Lolo Ciano



FRAN KATIGBAK

married, the clan arranged a big bash.

Not only did the family invite the entire barangay in Clark, Paniqui, Tarlac, my mom and I even had to head south to fetch relatives from Batangas. Among them was Lola Carmen, one of my grandfather's two surviving siblings.

Biggest reunion

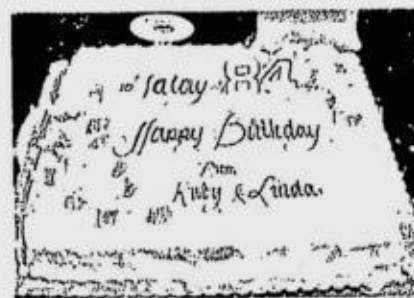
The birthday party turned out to be the biggest Katigbak reunion I

FOUR generations in their first family-reunion photo

could remember. While I missed the relatives who were based overseas, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the faces around me. We were four generations—the youngest, Lolo Ciano's great granddaughter Avelaine, had been christened also on the day of the celebrations.

I was used to reunions, Christmas parties and countless picture-taking sessions in my mom's side of the family. Most of them live in the city and have an easier time showing up at such gatherings.

It took quite an effort to bring Lolo Ciano's family together. So despite the sweaty uncles who had been cooking the endless buffet refill in kawas (very large cooking instruments) at the backyard, aunts insis-



BIRTHDAY cake with the right digits

FRAN KATIGBAK

tent they were too *sabog* to face the camera, and shy cousins who couldn't be lifted off their seats, I managed to drag everyone together for our very first family-reunion picture.

The date was Jan. 20, 2006, the day Lolo Ciano turned 84. Christmas was over but it sure felt just as festive.

E-mail the author at fkatigbak@inquirer.com.ph

When lolo's real age was finally established, the family gathered for a reunion to celebrate age, wisdom and life

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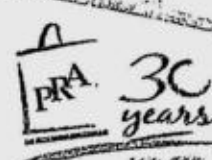


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CREATIVE CHRISTMAS CARDS

"Our family Christmas cards started when I was just 2 years old," said 25-year-old Aina Cruz. "As the years passed, my mom became more creative and asked artists such as Larry Alcala to make caricatures of us. We use a photo of a significant event that happened within that year to anyone of us in the family." Featured here are illustrations by Larry Alcala and by Dindo Llana for the book "You Know You're Filipino If" written by the author's mom.

Nothing new

I've realized that even if we celebrate Christmas the same way every year, it's really the family that matters

By Arianne Jenille Manzo

DEAR ATE PAOLA,

That is what really happens when all the funds are gone and your mind is not working. You go to your last resort, then consider that money after all is a probable gift this Christmas.

Besides, we were made to grow up with the idea that the thought behind the gift is more important than the gift itself. So, how are you there and everyone else?

I know what you are going to say, there is nothing new.

I know there is no memorable Christmas for us, really. Or, there is nothing special in the way we celebrate Christmas. I have come to accept the fact that we celebrate Christmas like how we celebrate every other Christmas. Sarcastic? But yes, it is the usual, the norm and the tradition.

Funny how our last year's Christmas—or even last, last year's—was pretty much similar to the other Christmases we've had. Mommy has never missed any Simbang Gabi for four consecutive years now.

The yearly Christmas Eve Mass would always be there. The same food will be prepared for the same people. We will still have our dinner with Nanay for Christmas and in Mamang for our lunch.

Maybe, it is only Lola Bin's pamasko that's changing. But we're still shy and silent whenever we visit her.

It has all been the same. But maybe not this year. Changes might occur, you never know. I haven't been home for six months, the longest that I've been away from home. Thanks to my selfish reason to beg mommy and daddy to let me join a competition.

Sometimes, we just have to let ourselves miss something in order to really appreciate it.

Because of this reason, I am dying to go home, Ate. I can't even believe how fulfilling putting an X mark on the calendar every day can be. I've never missed home like this. Of course that would surprise you.

Me? Dying to go home? Go on, laugh your heart out. You would never know how waking up alone for six months can be really saddening.

For six months, the dying to be independent like me has received her independence. Friends and going out can be helpful sometimes. But the Yuletide drama has bitten me already. I am hurt? Ouch!

Even if Mommy would still be noisy in order to wake up some people in the house, at least I am going to wake up to the voice I've been longing to hear for six months now. Neither the jeeps nor their howling drivers would interrupt my sleep now. I know we'd still go to church together.

At least, this time, I'd be with someone else and not on my own. The same food will be prepared, but it's real food and not fast-food crap.

We'd still spend our Christmas Eve with Nanay and lunch with Mamang, but this also means seeing our family and extended family all together. I know we will still go to Lola Bin's house and would receive pamasko. We'd still be shy and silent, I know, but let the money roll in.

As I write here inside a fast-food resto, face in front of a mirror while eating fries, an excited smile is plastered on my face. Here I am alone, but my mind has drifted all the way to South Cotabato.

Christmas jingles are everywhere here in Cebu. You should see the Christmas lights displayed along the street. I actually want to destroy them, for they remind me that Christmas is just a few days away. And the bazaar? My P50 gift will go somewhere here, after all.

I know we'll still have the same Christmas lights, tree and decor. I'll bet that spaghetti and fried chicken will still be on our Christmas Eve table. But I miss home, badly.

I've realized that even if we celebrate Christmas the same way every year, it's really the family that matters. Nothing's new with the coming Christmas, and am I glad for that.

I miss you, Ate, and everyone else there. I hope you keep the P50 bill.

JENILLE



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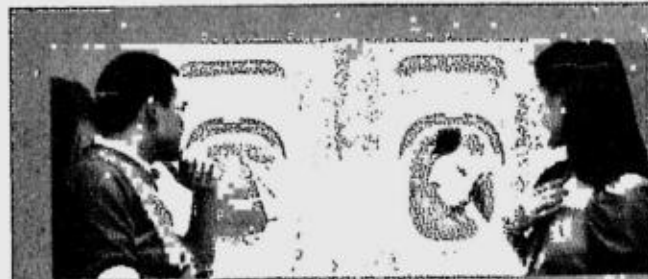
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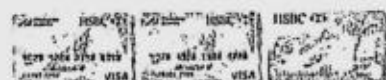
Nobody knew Ace Vergel had a heart ailment, except his son/H4



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S'porean is first 'Asian Idol'

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photo courtesy of www.theasianidol.tv

SINGAPOREAN Hady Mirza's "Asian Idol" win on Sunday night has been described as a "surprise" or "upset" victory.

The 27-year-old bested five other "Idols" from around the region, including Filipina Mau Marcelo, in the singing tilt held in Jakarta.

Apart from bragging rights as the first Asian Idol, Mirza won a

But Pinoys still consider Mau Marcelo a winner

world tour.

He told Channel News Asia on Monday, "Winning was never on my mind ... especially since I was up against contestants with better vocal [skills]. I just wanted to do Singapore proud."

During performance night on Saturday, judge Paul Moss of Malaysia put Mirza to task for his strained performance. In contrast, Marcelo was praised by the judges—as were Indonesia's Mike Mohede and Malaysia's Jaclyn Victor.

Marcelo's rendition of "Ako ang Nagwagi" even merited a standing ovation from judge Anu Malik, a leading Bollywood music director.

Marcelo, Vietnam's Phuong Vy and Mohede were consistently in the top three of an online poll conducted in the competition's official website.



HADY Mirza



S'POREAN/G3



(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival runs from Dec. 25 to Jan. 7, 2008.)

'Sakal, Sakali, Saklolo'

Star Cinema

Stars: Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Gina Pareño, Soliman Cruz, Ariel Ureta and Gloria Diaz
Directed by Jose Javier Reyes

Santos and Agoncillo reprise their roles as Angie and Jed in this sequel to the 2006 MMFF top-grosser "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo." The film takes off when Angie and Jed's son turns 4. The couple, burdened by the demands of parenthood, decide to leave their child in the care of friends to go abroad. This causes consternation to their moms who insisted that they take turns in taking care of the child, an arrangement that leads to disaster.

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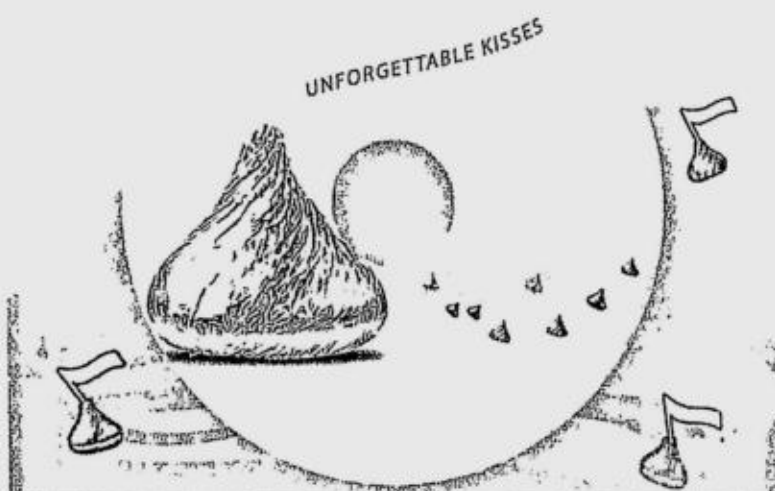
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<p>DECEMBER 17, Monday "Angels at Play" The Philippine Montessori Music Ensemble Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 18, Tuesday "Mungawit Colors of Christmas" La Salle Greenhills Grade School / Mungawit Songsters Grand Atrium, 6:00 pm</p> <p>"Kundirana Joy" La Salle Greenhills Kundirana 2008 Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 19, Wednesday "Echoes of Christmas" Sinag Primary and Intermediate Chorale St. Theresa's College Q.C. Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm</p> <p>"Opera Babies" Philippine Opera Company 7:00 pm</p>	<p>DECEMBER 20, Thursday "A Christmas Serenade" Jonathan Badon with Trio Ensemble Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 21, Friday "Little Voices of Christmas" Ateneo Grade School (Primary School) Grand Atrium, 6:00 pm</p> <p>"The Nutcracker" Ballet Manila and Liza Macuja-Elizalde Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>"Image Band" Streetscape, 10:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 22, Saturday "Christmas in the Air" Manila Symphony Orchestra Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p>	<p>DECEMBER 23, Sunday "Christmas Sea Adventure" Trumpets Music Academy Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 24, Monday "Christmas Melodies" Pizzicato String Quartet Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 26, Friday "A Resounding Christmas" PPO Brass Quintet Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>"Rockin' Revival" Streetscape, 10:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 29, Saturday "Holiday Tidings" PPO String Ensemble Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p>	<p>DECEMBER 30, Sunday "Woodwind Sonatas" PPO Woodwind Quintet Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm</p> <p>DECEMBER 31, Monday "Melodies of the Season" Trio Royale Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm</p> <p>JANUARY 5, Saturday "A Glorious New Year" Kithara Guitar Quartet Grand Atrium, 7:00 pm</p> <p>JANUARY 6, Sunday "Sounds of the New Year" The UP Concert Chorus Grand Atrium, 5:00 pm</p>
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For details, please call 633-7851 local 113/153. Events subject to change without prior notice. See posters for details.

Shangri-La Plaza

Romantic drama highlights equipoise between man and nature

DIRECTOR ADOLF ALIX MUST LOVE Batanes a lot that in the span of only one year, he's shot two movies there: "Kadin" for the Cinemalaya alternative film festival and the current screener, "Batanes," co-directed by David Hukom.

As in the earlier movie, "Batanes" showcases the beauty and power of the country's northernmost group of islands, especially its imposing mountains, pristine coastal vistas, blue-green waters, and waves breaking dramatically on jagged reefs near the shore.

The dramatic impression is one of raw, primitive emotions of nature being a constant pressure and influence in people's lives, of existence being panned by elemental forces, down to its most basic essence.

Thus, in the film's story, city girl Iza Calzado happily leaves the stresses of urban dwelling behind to start life anew with her young husband in Batanes, where he was born and where his parents still live.

The sea as rival

Iza adores her husband (Joem Basco) and his beautiful birthplace. After a while, however, she senses that she's been drawn into a subtle form of rivalry for her young spouse's virile attention. Her rival? The sea surrounding Batanes itself!

In her husband's view, the sea is a beautiful, powerful and jealous entity, one that gifts him with all the fish he needs—but also insists on his devotion to "her." This elemental entity can be fickle and even violent—and, tragically so, when one seemingly ordinary day, it becomes stormy, and claims the young fisherman's life.

His bereaved parents (Bembol Roco and Daria Ramirez) accept his death as a part of their elemental life on their island, but Iza can't. She grieves for months, and hates the sea for being so fickle and vicious.

Until it shows her another aspect of its power by pulling in the unconscious form of a young Taiwanese (Ken Chu). Despite her sadness, she instinctively takes care of the castaway, until he recovers.

They find themselves attracted to each other, and in time, he replaces her deceased husband in her heart. Thus does the sea shows that, while it can take love away, it can also give it back.

This is a quietly captivating and affirming tale, and its thematic points are vivified by Calzado's sometimes quietly luminous performance.

Alas, her Taiwanese co-star's performance suffers in comparison. Part of the problem isn't his fault: The production han-

dles the Filipino-Taiwanese "language translation" problem in stodgy and unenlightened fashion.

Also disappointing is the movie's less than inspired rendering of the man-nature equipoise that is at the heart of its story.

While the film's visuals are lovely, they do not sufficiently dramatize the visceral and mystifying aspects of that elemental relationship. The viewer understands the thematic thrust of the storytelling, but his heart is left relatively cold.

But we're glad we saw "Batanes," because it's a welcome respite from the loud and lurid productions that most other film-

makers churn out these days.

We're also glad that the film has cast Roco and Ramirez in important roles. They're

among our best thespians, so it's great finally to see them being given their due on the big screen.

VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 ENCHANTED MTRCB: GP	3 KINGDOM MTRCB: R-13
2 GOLDEN COMPASS MTRCB: PG-13	4 FRED CLAUZ MTRCB: GP HAIRSPRAY MTRCB: GP

PREMIERE THEATRE

ELIZABETH
MTRCB: PG-13

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ELIZABETH 1:05 3:55 6:45 9:30	MARTIAN CHILD 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30	DEATH PROOF 12:50 5:10 9:30	GOLDEN COMPASS 2:00 4:30 7:00 9:30	ELIZABETH 3:20 9:00 GOLDEN COMPASS 12:50 6:10
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BATANES 2:30 7:10	ONE MORE CHANCE 12:45 3:40 6:35 9:30	THE KINGDOM 4:20 9:20	PASUKOB 3:00 7:20	ENCHANTED 1:45 4:20 6:55 9:30
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OPENING TODAY

Martian Child

Stars John Cusack, Bobby Coleman, Joan Cusack, Amanda Peet, Anjelica Huston, Oliver Platt
Directed by Menno Meyjes

Based on David Gerrold's "loosely autobiographical" story, this drama-comedy recounts the travails of a sci-fi author (Cusack) who happens to be the adoptive dad of an introverted, kooky kid (Coleman) who insists he's from Mars. J.R. Jones of Chicago Reader comments that "Cusack carries this unabashed tearjerker." Kyle Smith of New York Post raves that it "has enough wit and unpredictability to hold your attention ... a diverting visit to Planet Cute." Jason Ferguson points out that the director "pulls an engaging film out of the potential clasp."

S'porean is first...

From page G1

Mirza was often in the bottom two, along with India's Abhijeet Sawant.

So why did Mirza win?

One explanation is offered by Perci Intalan, head of Creative and Entertainment Production of ABC 5, which aired the contest locally: "Hady must've gotten more of that crucial second vote outside his home country."

As a rule, text senders were asked to choose two contestants, to level the playing field and prevent hometown votes from influencing the outcome.

Terra Daffon, ABC 5 senior vice president for Corporate Affairs, agreed: "Perhaps that was what happened. Voters paired strong candidates with weak ones like Singapore and India who were trailing in the online survey."

Daffon further speculated: "It's possible that the voting glitches we experienced here (Manila) happened everywhere except Singapore where the voting was processed."

Text votes in Manila were delayed by eight hours and the delays continued until Sunday—night of the results show.

Intalan explained that the glitch was caused by "a clog in the telephone companies."

On Saturday's show, Singaporean judge Ken Lim asserted that the first "Asian Idol" should possess "commercial appeal."

On Monday, Lim reiterated on Channel News Asia that "looks and voice" had won the title for Mirza.

As for Marcelo?

She seems unruffled.

She was more thrilled about working with "American Idol" champ Taylor Hicks, a guest on finals night. "He's a Richard Gomez lookalike!"

RECORDS

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Kapamilya kiddie show wears Anak TV Seal

"SIRIT," A WEEKLY INTERACTIVE TV show in Filipino, was recently awarded the ANAK TV Seal for child- and family-friendly shows.

The awardees were chosen by 1,972 ju-

rors from various sectors nationwide during 35 screenings held from March to November. Additional jury screening was done collegially by the National Council for Children's Television, Movies and Television Review

KID
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and Classification Board, Bureau of Broadcasts, Philippine Information Agency and Department of Education.

"Sirit," a combination of puppetry, live action, graphics and simple animation, chronicles the adventures of two male and female hand puppets, Bo (Jacqueline Anne de los Reyes) and Bi (Priscila Rose Nalundasan), as they seek answers, find new worlds, unlock mysteries and discover themselves and their abilities. In the process, they show that learning is fun and demonstrate how to cope with the challenges that arise in their daily lives.

A female adult, Ate (Ma. Criselda Consunji), accompanies Bo and Bi on their adventure. As their life coach, Ate provides discipline, guidance, stability and the knowledge needed by them in their daily learning adventure.

Main audience

The content of "Sirit" is based on the Early Childhood Care and Development curriculum of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

This set of teaching goals was specifically developed for preschool children aged 3-6 years old.

"Sirit" airs on ABS-CBN Channel 2 every Saturday at 7:50-8:15 a.m. It is also seen worldwide through The Filipino Channel.

The ANAK TV Seal is issued yearly by the Southeast Asian Foundation for Children and Television led by its president, Edgardo Rocas, and secretary general, Mag Cruz Hatol.

The latest awarding was held at the Soka Gakai Auditorium in Quezon City on Dec. 11.

AT THE CINEMAS

Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS G83 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations. Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729-7777

GLORIETTA 1	1 DEATH PROOF	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	3 BATANES	4 HITMAN
GLORIETTA 4	1 ENCHANTED	2 THE KINGDOM	3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	GUARANTEED SEATS
GREENBELT 1	1 MARTIAN CHILD	2 THE GOLDEN COMPASS		
GREENBELT 3	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE		
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 MARTIAN CHILD	4 GONE BABY GONE	5 ENCHANTED	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 THE GAME PLAN	3 FRED CLAU	4 LUST CAUTION
MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	2 ENCHANTED		
TRINOMA	1 BATANES	2 DEATH PROOF	3 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	4 MARTIAN CHILD
	5 ENCHANTED	6 FRED CLAU	7 THE GOLDEN COMPASS	GUARANTEED SEATS

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glorietta

Taylor Hicks Live!
December 18; 7pm; Glorietta 4 Park

GREENBELT

Taylor Hicks Live!
December 19; 7pm; Greenbelt 3 Park

ALABANG TOWN CENTER

Christian Bautista Live!
December 22; 6pm; Town Plaza

AYALA CENTER CEBU

Christmas Chorale featuring Akafelias
December 22; 7pm; Activity Center

MARKET! MARKET!

Japan Foundation Karate Demonstration
December 18; 6pm; Activity Center

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December 20; 7pm; Activity Center

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Rank	Movie	Weeks in Release	Gross
1	21st Century	13	\$70.54 mil
2	Alvin and the Chipmunks	13	\$45.00 mil
3	The Golden Compass	23	\$39.03 mil
4	Enchanted	43	\$38.00 mil
5	No Country for Old Men	63	\$33.00 mil
6	The Perfect Holiday	13	\$27.00 mil
7	Frost	13	\$23.00 mil
8	3 This Christmas	43	\$21.00 mil
9	16 Alamo	23	\$18.00 mil
10	August Rush	43	\$17.00 mil
11	The Week Last Week	43	\$15.00 mil

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

NEUTERS-D

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"PEKAS" FACTS

"Pekas" clinically known as Melasma appears as irregularly, shaped grey-brown or dark-brown patches on facial skin. Most often it appears on both sides of the face usually seen on cheeks, forehead, nose-bridge, upper lip and jaw lines.



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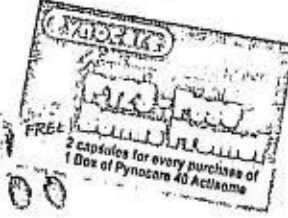
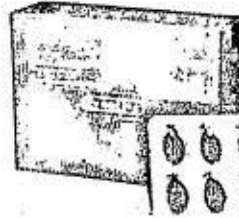
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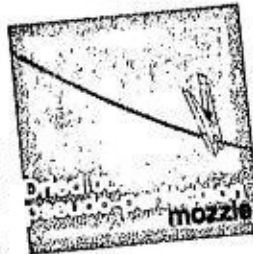


MOZZIE vocalist Pam Pastor and guitarist Francis Gaerlan

PHOTO BY ROLLIE VALENZUELA

Mozzie goes schizo-phonic

By Oliver M. Pulumbait
Contributor



CURFEW HAD BEEN announced, but the band Mozzie (mot-zee) pushed through with a special show on Nov. 29 at the Xaymaca bar in Timog.

It was a well-attended EP (extended play, with seven tracks—fewer than a full-length album) launch party, but the set was cut short so guests could go home early.

The gig was over by 11 p.m., though the band members stayed a bit to sign copies of their "Dried to Pseudo-Perfection" CDs for fans and friends.

Mozzie is made up of INQUIRER youth section editor-writer Pam Pastor (vocals), her cousins Chrissie (guitars) and Fi Capicoy (bass), and their friend Francis Gaerlan (guitars). Powie Pastor, Pam's brother, and Che Santos alternate on drums. Mozzie's regular repertoire includes sensitive, angry-woman rock, as well as genderless, universal ponderings. They do spirited covers of songs by Rachael Yamagata and Alanis Morissette during regular gigs.

How does it feel to have your parents around during gigs?

Pam: It's awesome to have a mom who understands my passion for music. She gets my humor; she doesn't cringe when I curse.

Chrissie: Our dad is usually the one who's around. He bought our musical instruments. The number one criticism I get from him is, "Why won't you face the audience?"

You all have day jobs. How demanding has performing been?

Fi: It's very hard to balance jobs and gigs. Plus we have to squeeze in band practices, recording and writing.

Pam: Things get crazy sometimes. We [sometimes] practice in the middle of the night. We don't complain because the truth is, we need this. The gigs are like therapy for us, a chance to take a break and have a blast!

Francis: We'd rather do this than rest at home after work.

What should people know about the eventual release of your full-length album?

Pam: It will be out early next year [and] we have more than enough to fill an album.

Fi: It's going to be a 15-track album with more schizo pop goodness.

What is "schizo pop"?

Fi: It's basically pop music with elements from other genres.

Pam: We came up with [the term] "schizo pop" because we got tired of stuttering when people asked about our kind of music. "Schizo" describes a band that can't decide if it's happy or angry, hopeful or cynical. It reflects who we are—constantly changing and searching for identity. And we'll entertain you while we do it.

How "indie" is the EP?

Francis: We did everything ourselves—including folding and inserting the CD sleeves.

Pam: We're as indie as indie can be. We raided our bank accounts. It's been crazy, but... people telling us they've been playing it all day, or they're in love with our songs, that's all we need to keep going.

DID
YOU
KNOW...

Celine Dion bids Caesars adieu

LAS VEGAS—Celine Dion called it a wrap at Caesars Palace, acknowledging in her final show that pregnancy and poor early reviews almost sank her titan-

ic five-year engagement.

As adoring fans cheered through Saturday night's performance, Dion interspersed her usual numbers with emotion-filled monologues: "At one point, it was like feel-

ing like the Titanic was about to sink again," she said. "But we believed and we went on with it."

Taking Dion's place starting Feb. 20 is Bette Midler. AP



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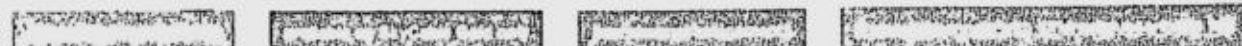
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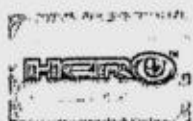
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The University of the Philippines on its **100th** Year



The Vision for UP: Excellence, Service and Leadership in the Next 100 Years

The celebration's theme captures the University's vision for the future: Excellence is expressed as the discovery and development of new areas of knowledge; Service means going beyond conducting research to include designing effective action plans; and Leadership demands programs that will help transform the nation into an economic powerhouse.

This will guide the University's rationalization of program offerings, efforts to strengthen its position as a leading research university, firming up its science and technology programs, and developing a community of scholars with credentials comparable to those in the world's best universities.

JANUARY 8 GRAND LAUNCH ALL SET

UP's Centennial Year will be off to an energetic start as UP Diliman and the UP Alumni Association line up a full day of celebrations at the Diliman campus. Tau Alpha fraternity will sponsor a fun run in the morning, and at 2 p.m., a parade will wind its way around the campus, to Quezon Memorial Circle and back. Decorated Ikot jeeps, the UP Marching Band, the UP Pep Squad, varsity teams and the UP dance troupes will lead college and student org contingents in street dancing. Motorcades

will start in the other UP campuses and converge in Diliman.

At 6 p.m., the UP Carillon bells will ring again for the first time since 1988. Then at 7 p.m., the UP Madrigal Singers and the UP Concert Chorus will perform free at the Amphitheater behind Quezon Hall. There will be food and drink booths, and special Centennial memorabilia will also be on sale.

A big fireworks display sponsored by Beta Epsilon fraternity will cap the evening.

Centennial Commission Takes the Lead

By virtue of Executive Order No. 537, the UP Centennial Commission was formed to spearhead the task of raising P5 billion to build up the University Endowment Fund. This will fund faculty development programs, expansion of student services, modernization of campus facilities, and improvement of libraries and laboratories.

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Edgardo Angara



Vice Chairman
Dr. Magdaleno
B. Albarracin



Exec. Director:
Prof. Benjamin
C. Sandoval



Int'l Spokesperson
Prof. Elena C.
Pernia

From the Board of Regents



President
Emerlinda C. Roman



Regent
Nelia Gonzales



Regent
Abraham Sarmiento



Regent
Gari Tiongco



Regent
Edmundo Varona (†)

Fundraising Goes Into Overdrive: TARGET P5 BILLION

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Nestor Espenilla, **Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor**

From the Private Sector

Dr. Gregorio Alviar
Ms. Robina Gokongwei-Pe
Atty. Gizela Gonzalez
Atty. Eduardo Hernandez
Mr. Menardo Jimenez
Mr. Jose "Pitoy" Moreno
Dr. Angelita T. Reyes

From Abroad

Mr. Theodore B. M. Aquino - **California**
Dr. Diosdado Banatao - **California**
Dr. Carmencita C. Quesada-Fulgado - **New York**
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President Roman Kicks Off Centennial Year Celebration

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launch what promises to be a landmark year for the country's premier university.

The Centennial Year program will be a showcase of UP's past, present and future and is meant to demonstrate the importance of the

academic institution not just to its present and former students, teachers and staff, but also to the rest of the country. According to President Roman, the university's role in national development will be at the heart of the celebration.



The University of the Philippines on its **100th** Year



The Vision for UP: Excellence, Service and Leadership in the Next 100 Years

The celebration's theme captures the University's vision for the future: Excellence is expressed as the discovery and development of new areas of knowledge; Service means going beyond conducting research to include designing effective action plans; and Leadership demands programs that will help transform the nation into an economic powerhouse.

This will guide the University's rationalization of program offerings, efforts to strengthen its position as a leading research university, firming up its science and technology programs, and developing a community of scholars with credentials comparable to those in the world's best universities.

JANUARY 8 GRAND LAUNCH ALL SET

UP's Centennial Year will be off to an energetic start as UP Diliman and the UP Alumni Association line up a full day of celebrations at the Diliman campus. Tau Alpha fraternity will sponsor a fun run in the morning, and at 2 p.m., a parade will wind its way around the campus, to Quezon Memorial Circle and back. Decorated Ikot jeeps, the UP Marching Band, the UP Pep Squad, varsity teams and the UP dance troupes will lead college and student org contingents in street dancing. Motorcades

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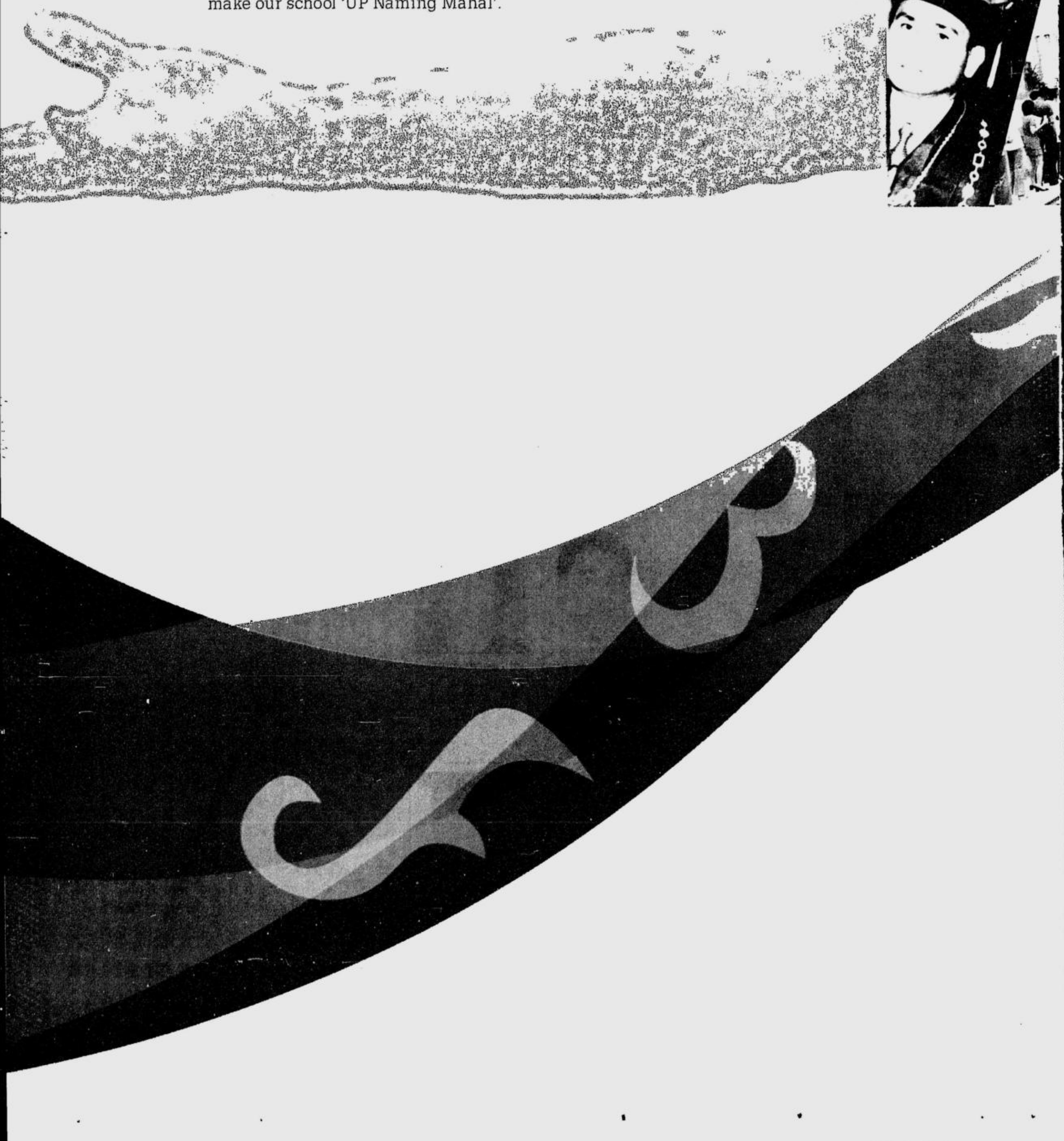


PRIDE in the past.

30 out of 31 National Scientists,
36 out of 57 National Artists,
7 out of 14 presidents,
12 Chief Justices
of the Supreme Court,
15,000 doctors, 8,000 lawyers,
23,000 teachers.

The lives and work of over 247,000 alumni are woven
into the fabric of our country.

As we celebrate our 100th year as a national univer-
sity, we celebrate the minds and hearts that have
walked through our halls, and tell the stories that
make our school 'UP Naming Mahal'.



POWER of the present.

7 universities,
12 campuses all over the country
258 undergraduate programs
438 graduate programs
Students from almost all 16 regions
and all socio-economic brackets
More than 80% passing rate in most
national licensure exams

Over 50,000 students demonstrate that excellence
and strength are born out of diversity.

Today, UP is a melting pot of varied Filipino
regions, cultures, and religions. Here, the best
minds are not limited by their capacity to pay.
Side by side, students prepare for life in the real
world by immersing themselves in
the varied, vibrant microcosm
of the real world that is UP.





PROMISE for the future

we will lead the way

in new groups science and technology
emerging

world-class

The first steps have been taken. A National Science Complex has been established at the Diliman campus. Two science and technology parks have been put up. Cutting edge programs in fields like materials science, biotechnology, pervasive computing, telemedicine, food technology and environmental management are now in place.

In the coming years, expect to see more PhD holders in the faculty, greater specialization in each campus, increased research, and better use of knowledge in real-world applications.

The University of the Philippines will never be content to just sit on its laurels. As we celebrate our Centennial, we're already hard at work on the next 100 years.





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Published with support from FRIENDS OF U.P.

RETAKING OF PRECEDING FRAME

CENTENNIAL ACTIVITIES GO INTO FULL SWING

UP Centennial Fellows Named

President Emerlinda Roman and a search committee recently named 12 UP Centennial Fellows, chosen for their deep commitment to scholarship, achievements in their fields, their fidelity to the values of the University, and their contributions to the growth of UP as a community of scholars. The eleven Fellows will be delivering "Self-Reflection Lectures: The View from the Inside" over the course of the Centennial year.

The honorees are: Dr. Gemino Abad, Arts and Letters; Dr. Jose V. Abueva, Political Science; Prof. Randolph David, Sociology; Prof. Emmanuel S. de Dios, Economics; Dr. Maria Serena I. Diokno, History; Dr. Ernesto Domingo, Medicine; Dr. Cecilia Florencio, Food Science and Nutrition; Dr. Jose Magpantay, Physics; Dr. Wilfredo David, Engineering and Agro-Industrial Technology; Dr. Edgardo D. Gomez, Marine Science; Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, former UP President; and Dr. Ramon Santos, Music.

Centennial Songwriting Competition is On



Undergraduate and graduate students of the UP System are invited to enter their original compositions on the theme "Looking Back to Look Forward: 100 Years of Excellence". Songs can be in English, Filipino or Taglish. Deadline for entries is on April 14, 2008. Finalist songs will be performed at the Centennial Concert on June 17. For more information, please contact the College of Music in UP Diliman or visit <http://centennial.up.edu.ph>.

Gawad Likhaan Launched

The UP Institute of Creative Writing recently launched the UP Centennial Gawad Likhaan, a literary contest open to all Filipino citizens. Six awards, each one worth P200,000 are being offered for original, book-length works in the following categories: novel or short story collection in English; novel or short story collection in Filipino; poetry collection in English; poetry collection in Filipino; a full-length work or collection of creative non-fiction in English; and a full length work or collection of sanaysay in Filipino.

This competition celebrates UP's role in national literature. To date, six National Artists for Literature are from UP. Deadline for entries is on March 31, 2008. For full details on how to join, visit <http://centennial.up.edu.ph/gawadlikhaan>.

Digital Festival and Filmmaking Competition to Dramatize the UP Experience

In a nod to the 21st century, the UP College of Mass Communication kicked off a short film competition focused on the unique experience of being part of UP's 100 years. This contest is open to all undergraduate students of the UP system, and will accept entries in the following genres: documentary, narrative, experimental or animation. Deadline for entries is on April 25, 2008. For more information on how to join, visit <http://centennial.up.edu.ph>.

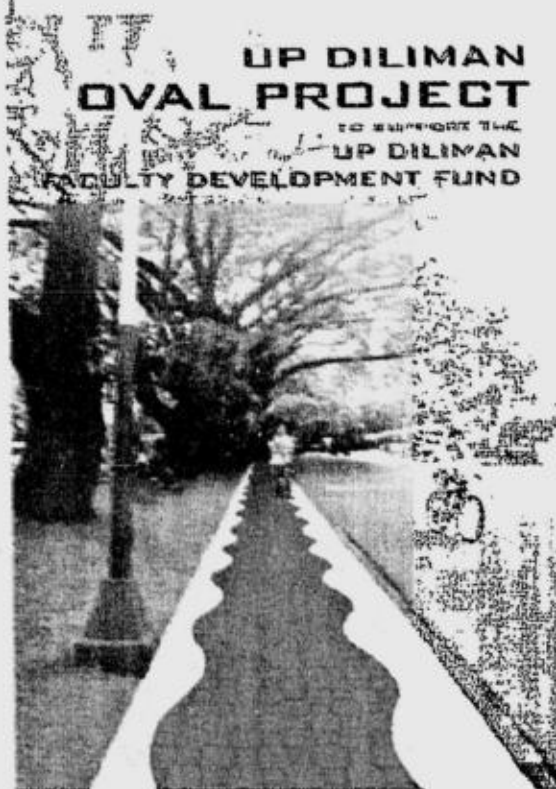


ALL 7 UP CAMPUSES LINE UP CALENDAR OF CELEBRATIONS

UP DILIMAN

Alumni Oval Walk Project for the Centennial Faculty Development Fund

Ever wanted to carve your name onto a well-loved piece of UP property? Now you can, with permission from the school too! You would also be funding faculty development in the process. For a P25,000 donation, UP Diliman will offer tiles inscribed with an alumnus' name and college to be set around the oval



Other UP Diliman events: January: Donors' reception; February: UP Diliman Month; April 27: Centennial Commencement Exercises; June: Grand Homecoming; July: hosting of the UAAP Season 71; December: Centennial Lantern Parade.

UP MANILA

UP Manila's Centennial celebration will be centered around the campus' role as the cradle of the early founding years of the University and of UP Manila as a health science center. The campus' showcase project will be the UP Manila Museum and Archives, an interactive museum highlighting the health sciences, medicine and the campus heritage. It is envisioned to become a tourist and educational destination in Manila.



LEFT PERSPECTIVE

Other UP Manila events: June: Inauguration of the UP Manila Centennial Oblation Plaza; June 18: Grand Centennial Celebration; June 20: Inauguration of the UP Manila Fitness Trail, UPMMA Alumni Homecoming; June 28: Inauguration of various buildings, offices, and laboratories; August: Centennial Lecture Series; August 29: UP Manila Cultural Show; September: International Conference on Health Professions Education

UP BAGUIO

The UP Baguio Alumni-Student Center

The Northern Luzon unit is undertaking the construction of the UP Baguio Alumni-Student Center, which is envisioned as a place where



alumni can come together for reunions, alumni-association meetings and forums, community events, or simply to meet and talk over a cup of coffee.

Other UP Baguio events: February 7-9: Cordillera Studies International Conference; Opening of the Cordillera/Northern Luzon Archive; April 21 to May 3: Centennial Summer Extension Program and Arts Festival; April 2-4: 2008 Science Summit;

UP LOS BAÑOS

Science and Technology Park

UPLB has set aside 155 hectares of land for development into a Science and Technology Park that will maximize the University's strengths in the areas of Environment, Agriculture and Biotechnology. The park will help promote agri-based technologies, biotechnology and information technology. It will house UPLB's major research centers and is expected to ensure the University's continued leadership in S & T.



The S & T Park is expected to nurture a symbiotic relationship between UPLB's academic centers and private corporations. UPLB is currently seeking accreditation as a Special Economic Zone for the S & T Park.

Other UPLB events: February: Alternative Energy Showcase; June-November:

Sayasay Pagtatanghal Episodes; Search and Marking of UPLB Heritage Trees; October: Centennial Barn Dance, 90th Loyalty Day and Alumni Homecoming, Campus-wide Lecture Series and Book Exhibits, Unveiling of Historical Academic Portals, Fund Raising Launches for Museum of Natural History, Culture and Arts, the Science and Technology Incubation Park, and the Maria Makiling Ecotourism Village.

UP OPEN UNIVERSITY'S Unique Offerings

As one of the few distance learning institutions in the country, UP's Open University has lined up some unusual projects. There is the UP Open University TV musical special in October 2008, using UPOU students, faculty, staff and friends in the entertainment industry. There are book projects and Distance Learning Package projects, as well as various fund drives to raise needed support for Faculty Development, a scholarship fund, and modernization of equipment and facilities.

UPOU has also lined up unique promotional items to be sold to help fundraising efforts, including paghahabi cloth, and miniatures versions of the oblation.

Other UPOU events: February: Forum, Exhibition and Competition "The Virtual and Visual Conversations"; February-April: 100 Days of Global Voices Online; May: Unfurling of "Pagtagni-tagat ng mga Alaala" sewn tapestry; November: Launch of the Centennial Wall

UP VISAYAS

Unique Tri-campus Celebration

In a nod to being located on three campuses in Cebu, Iloilo and Tacloban, UP Visayas' Centennial celebrations will be timed to match the annual celebration of the Sinulog, Dinagyang and Pintados festivals in those three cities. And in September, a Tri-campus Centennial Sportsfest will also be held.

Regents' Hill To Rise In Miag-Ao Campus

Another major UP Visayas' Centennial project is Regents' Hill. A multi-purpose five-level garden on the hill behind the UPV Administration Building in Miagao, Iloilo. It will be an attraction that will both protect the slope as well as serve as a tourist attraction in the campus. As the visitors reach each



level, they can sit at the gazebos, enjoy the view and appreciate the medically important indigenous plants and the essences of the ethnobotanicals that will be planted all throughout the slope of the Regents' Hill. And when they reach the top, they can enjoy a wider view of the landscape and the Guimaras Strait from a viewing deck.

Other UP Visayas events: July 1-5: Tacloban Grand Anniversary Celebration and Alumni Homecoming; July 12-19: Cebu Grand Anniversary Celebration and Alumni Homecoming; July 21-26: Iloilo Grand Anniversary Celebrations and University Tour; To be scheduled: Leyte Samar Performing Arts Festival; Zarzuela and Retro Concert in Iloilo

UP MINDANAO Completes Facelift with a Home for the Oblation

In 1998, UP Mindanao got its very own oblation statue. And in this Centennial year, the campus, along with the UP Alumni Association Davao chapter, is raising funds to build a plaza for it. Meant to become a central gathering place that will also help instill a sense of pride in the community, the Oblation Plaza will feature walkways, plant boxes, and grassy areas.



Sketch of the plaza

Other UP Mindanao events: February: 13th UP Mindanao Anniversary Celebration; July 9-12: International Conference on Supply Chain Management; August 2006-December 2008: Centennial Lecture Series

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

1908

The University of the Philippines is established by the First Philippine Legislature in Manila.

1911

UP has seven academic units by this year: Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Liberal Arts, Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Medicine, and Fine Arts.

1915

UP is led by its first Filipino President, Judge Ignacio Villamor.

1934

The First Lantern Parade is held.

1935

Guillermo Tolentino, later named National Artist, completes the Oblation.

1941

President Manuel Quezon orders UP to close because of the war. Despite the order and the presence of Japanese troops, three schools and four colleges continue to hold classes.

1948-49

UP transfers to the 493-hectare Diliman campus.

1959

UP begins teaching general education courses in humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

1970-1972

There is an upsurge of student activism, as part of the First Quarter Storm. Students form barricades around the campus as the Diliman Commune is set up.

1972

The University of the Philippines System is established. UP Los Baños is declared the first autonomous unit.

1977

The UP Health Sciences Unit, later renamed UP Manila, becomes the second autonomous unit.

1979

UP Visayas is established.

1983

UP Diliman is declared the fourth autonomous unit.

1995

UP Open University and UP Mindanao are established as the fifth and sixth autonomous units.

1999

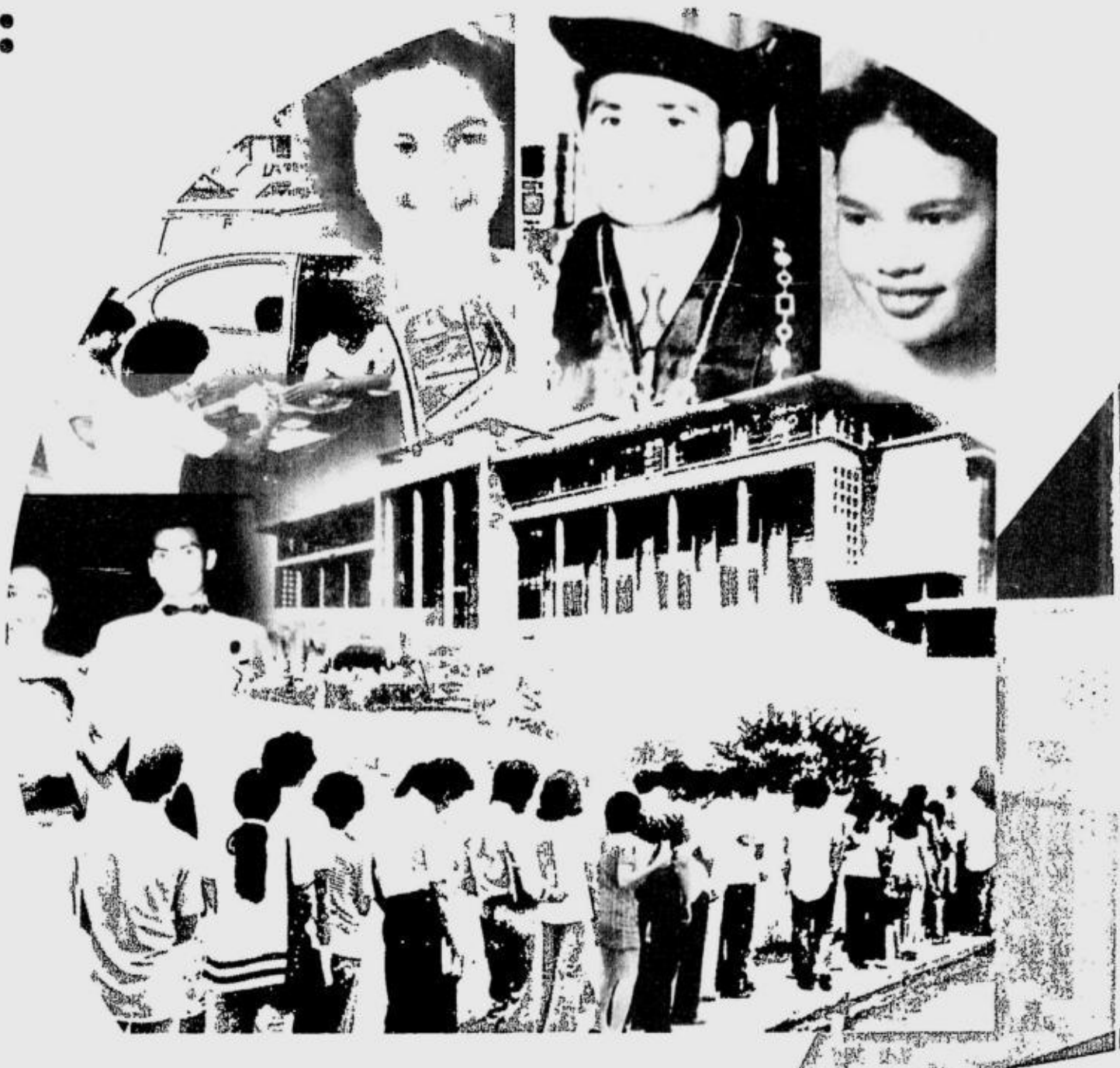
The Registration System is computerized, rendering obsolete UP's old nickname "University of Pila".

2005

UP Baguio is established as the seventh university of the UP System.

2007

UP kicks off its Centennial Countdown as the Philippine General Hospital celebrates its 100th year.



Breakthroughs from the Country's Premier University

Rise of the National Science Complex

In a major move designed to bolster the country's scientific and technological capabilities, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the establishment of a National Science Complex and Technology Incubation Park inside UP Diliman. To be housed in a 21.9 hectare portion of the campus, the Complex has P500 million in funding earmarked by the Department of Budget and Management.

The complex is envisioned to become the national hub for the generation and application of new scientific knowledge in the natural and applied sciences and mathematics.



Marine Scientists Embark on Project to Save World's Reefs

Together with universities from Australia, Mexico and Tanzania, the UP Marine Science Institute was designated a Center of Excellence by the Coral Reef Targeted Research and Capacity Building Project (CRTR & CBM), which is a high-priority global initiative that aims to find solutions for the world's rapidly deteriorating coral reefs. Their goal is to find new knowledge, tools and techniques that will help communities and local governments manage their coral reefs.



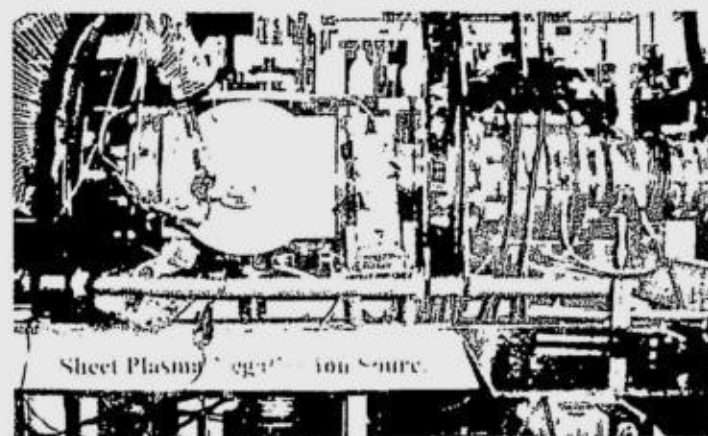
The CRTR & CBM Project is funded by the World Bank and the Australian government, and involves at least eighty of the world's leading marine experts from over fifty institutions.

2 Innovations from National Institute of Physics Awarded International Patents

A titanium nitride (TiN) coating for industrial tools and a technique for visualizing and mapping materials in integrated circuits invented by professors from the National Institute of Physics were recently recognized by the Taiwan and US Patent Offices respectively.

The TiN coating is an innovation that will improve the performance and quality of tools used in industrial processes. It was developed by Dr. Henry J. Ramos at the Plasma Physics Laboratory of the NIP.

On the other hand, the technique developed by Cesar Saloma, Vincent Ricardo Daria and Jelda Jayne Miranda (who is currently working with Intel), uses



optical beams to detect defects in integrated circuits, which are essential in high-value industries like I.T., telecommunications and digital appliance production. This breakthrough technique has the potential to save manufacturers millions of dollars in manufacturing defects.

Edible Vaccines Available In 3 To 5 Years

Plant molecular biologists and immunologists from UP Manila and UP Los Baños are collaborating on the preparation of vaccine cuisines. They believe that edible vaccines, which would be cheaper and easier to administer, especially in developing countries like the Philippines, could be ready in as little as 3 years. Dr. Nina Gloriani Barzaga, a professor of medical microbiology and microbial immunology at UPM, says that they are testing vaccines which would elicit mucosal as well as systemic immunity, which would help control transmission at the level where the pathogen enters the host.

UP Techies Connect Batanes Schools to the Net

In a pioneering project in rural connectivity, four professors from the Electrical and Electronics Engineering Department of the College of Engineering in UP Diliman installed wireless internet connections in the country's northernmost province. The team, composed of Professors Manuel Ramos Jr., PhD., Roel Ocampo PhD., Meinard Aclan, and Romarie Lorenzo, trekked and climbed all over the province to set up relay points. The team worked with the Department of Education and the Gearing Up for Internet Literacy in Schools (GILAS) project. Its goal was to verify the validity of the technology, in order to pave the way for succeeding rural connectivity efforts that would bridge the digital divide.



Excellence In Other Fields

- UP graduates consistently top board exams, particularly Law and Dentistry. According to the Professional Regulatory Commission, the top three universities with the highest average scores in the board exams for all courses, are UP units.
- The UP Madrigal Singers win top honors in many international choral competitions, including the Grand Prix in Tours, France.
- The UP Singing Ambassadors won awards in four prestigious chorale competitions in Europe.
- Of the seven Ten Outstanding Young Men awarded in 2005, four are from UP, and another one is a multi-awarded researcher of the University.
- Three UP alumni were recently selected as National Artists: Benedicto Cabrera for Visual Arts, Ramon Obusan for Dance, and Abdulmari Asia Imao for Sculpture.
- Auraeus Solito's "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros" won the Golden Zenith award at the Montreal Film Festival, Jeffrey Jeturian's "Kubrador" the Fipresci prize at the 28th Moscow International Film Festival, Raya Martin's "Maikling Pelicula ng Ysang Indio Nacional" won the Premio Lino Miciche and Premio Musicfeel at the Pesaro Film Festival.

Support the University of the Philippines on its 100th year. Donations can be made to The UP Oblation Fund.

DBP (Quezon Ave.)- Savings Account No. 5-01317-460-8

LBP (Katipunan Branch QC) - Peso Acct. No: 1461-2220-21; Dollar Acct. No.: 1464-0032-46 * Dollar Swift Code: TLBPMMAXXX

For more information, visit: www.up.edu.ph or www.http://centennial.up.edu.ph for Centennial news and information.